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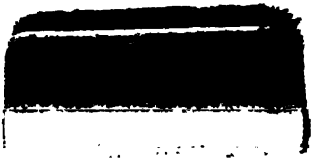

The Truth and Life:

TWENTY-TWO SERMONS

BY THE

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TO THE

CLERGY AND LAITY

OF THE

PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE DIOCESE OF OHIO,

These Discourses,

PUBLISHED ACCORDING TO A REQUEST, LONG SINCE MADE IN THE DIOCESAN CONVENTION, ARE

MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND PASTOR,

THE AUTHOR,

WITH HIS EARNEST PRAYER THAT WHEN HIS VOICE IS SILENT IN DEATH, HE MAY LONG BE PERMITTED, BY THEM, TO TEACH AND PREACH JESUS CHRIST.

CINCINNATI, OCT. 1, 1854.

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SERMON I.

THE POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD.

PSALM CXIX. 130.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple."

"IN the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." The material of this world was all there, under that darkness, but there was nothing else. Organization was not; life was not; there was the element of all things, but the form of none.

"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" Still the chaos remained. Life came not. There was to be no order nor life, till there was light; nor any light, without the word. Then came the word of God; its first voice to this world: "*Let there be light. And there was light. And the evening and the morning were the first day.*" Thus early the union of the Spirit and the word. The next thing was order, organization; then life, and then man, a living soul in the likeness of his Maker.

But soon that crown upon the head of creation had fallen. The image of God, in man, was lost. The grace of God interposes to restore it. Lost in the first Adam, it is renewed in the second. There is a new creation in

Christ Jesus. The Spirit of God comes down again and moves upon the face of that deep of darkness, and confusion, and spiritual death, into which the whole human nature is fallen.

But the God of nature is the God of grace. And his instrument, as in the beginning, still is Light. Until the light of the knowledge of Himself, in his law and in his gospel, in his justice and grace, in his holiness and love, as all are manifested in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, be received into man's heart, his recovery to the likeness of God cannot begin; his nature must remain "without form, and void;" its affections out of place and perverted, in conflict with one another and the Creator, all desolate and empty as to all spiritual life. "God is light." His children are "children of light." Light is the element of their new birth. How then reads the account in the Scriptures of the new creation? "God, (it is written) who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."*

Such is the elementary process by which we are recovered from the fall. "We are his workmanship, (saith the Apostle) *created in Christ Jesus* unto good works." Each true child of God is that new creation; exclusively, and most wonderfully the "workmanship" of God; the work of his power, his wisdom, his grace; transforming him by the renewing of his mind, translating him into marvellous light; a work even more to the glory of God than the creation of the heavens and earth,

* 2 Cor. iv. 6.

because the manifestation of his grace, as well as of his power. All this visible workmanship shall pass away; but *that* remaineth, and will be for ever making known more and more, "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God."

But from beginning to ending, that work, by the Spirit as the power, is by *the light* as the instrument; "light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ;" in his person and offices, especially in his sacrifice on the cross—and that glory made visible to us by *God's shining in our hearts.*

No sooner appears that light in the heart, than, under the power of the Spirit, all things become new; order begins where confusion reigned. Life enters the void of that dead and desolate nature. The law of holiness takes the mastery. The affections find their rightful objects and range themselves in their proper relations to the Creator and the creature. The love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and man is again in the likeness of his Maker.

But the God of nature is the God of grace. And as light came not in the first creation without the *word,* so it comes not in the new creation.

We have seen that it is "the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ," that God employs. The sun, then, that shines on us is Christ. "I, (saith our ascended Lord) am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." But that sun has gone far out of our sight. How then doth his shining now come to us? When the sun of our natural day is beyond our horizon,

there is a moon to receive its light and reflect it to the earth. Has the God of grace provided in like manner for the absence of him on whom our spiritual day depends? The Psalmist answers: "Thy word is a light unto my feet and a lamp unto my path." God, by his Spirit, takes of the things that are Christ's, *in his word*, and shows them unto us.* He shines on the Scriptures, and by them in our hearts. He gives no new revelation to the word, but he gives a new sight to our understanding. He plants no new stars in the sky, but he gives us a new lens to see what have been always there. Other means of making us wise unto salvation he could certainly have employed, as he gave light to the earth before he gave it the sun. But as it is now his ordinance, that without the sun there shall be no day, so hath he ordained, that without his word there shall be no life abiding in us. Other ordinances he hath made for our spiritual nurture and growth, but all their light is in the word. Whether the voice of the preacher, or the Church's discipline, or the ministration of sacraments, they are only the means whereby God shows forth, applies, or seals more emphatically the precious things of his word; and only according to the reception of this in the heart, can they be efficacious to salvation.

We are now prepared for the first of the two divisions of this discourse, viz:

I. *The condition* on which the efficacy of the word depends—"*The entrance* of thy word giveth light."

The word of God must have entrance to our hearts. "Let the word of Christ *dwell in you*, in all wisdom," is

* John xvi. 14.

the requirement. "God hath shined in our hearts," was the experience of the Apostle and his brethren.

The daily sun enlightens us not, except his rays have admission through the windows communicating with the mind within. It is his entrance to the inner chamber of the eye by which we see. So must it be with the word.

"True," says some reader of the Scriptures; "I am not ignorant of a truth so elementary. Of course the word must have access to my thoughts and opinions: I must not only read but ponder it. Whatever impedes an honest interpretation must be taken away. It must have entrance to my most cherished belief." Yea, but there is still an inner chamber which it claims to enter. The outer apartment of the mind it must indeed first penetrate, and with your every intellectual faculty and effort must it be allowed free course. But it must not stop there; for its chief message cannot be delivered there. It is sent to the secret conscience and heart, and must not be kept waiting outside, as if you could receive its errand at second hand. It comes direct from God, charged to speak with the master of the house; and in your most private audience, face to face, must it be received. It comes with "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," and demands that your most hidden thoughts, and motives, and affections—all from which are the issues of life—be arraigned before it, to be examined, reproved, corrected, instructed. Shutting the door, then, against the interruption of worldly cares; realizing the presence of God and his eye upon us; mindful of all we have at stake, and seeking help at

the throne of grace, that we may read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the word to our soul's health, we must bid it search the ground of our hearts. Amidst the deep corruptions and wants of our nature, amidst all its ruin and indwelling sins, in the citadel of our rebellion and the temple of our worldly idolatry, the word must take its stand, and speak to us face to face, telling us of God, his law, his holiness, his condemnation of our sins; telling us of Christ, the grace that gave him, and the love that brought him to be a sacrifice for us, and the fulness and freeness of the salvation his blood hath purchased for us; yea, deep in our hearts with the consciousness of our ruin and beggary bearing us down to eternal death, must the word speak to us of Christ on the cross, and Christ on the throne; especially of the perfect justification of all believers through his righteousness imputed, and their finally perfect sanctification through his Spirit imparted unto them.

Such is the entrance on which the power of the word, to make us wise unto salvation, depends. And thus are explained the different effects of the reading of the Bible on different minds equally familiar with its chapters.

To many a man, after years of diligent perusal, it remains, as to all spiritual improvement, a sealed book. He is still "the natural man" that "perceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;"* seeing them afar off, as the natural eye sees the starry nebulæ of the heavens, but wanting the help of a spiritual vision to bring them nigh and discover their magnitude, and

*1 Cor. ii. 14.

number, and relations, and glory. Every controversy of the truth, he may have mastered. Among the ablest of its expounders, he may be ranked. And yet may there be a veil on his heart,* so that he sees nothing beyond the letter, and a ray from the inner temple of the truth may have never reached him. Such a verse as, "*to you that believe, he is precious,*" may find no response in his experience. All within him may remain as cold and dead to the calls of the word, as undrawn by its invitations, as uncheered by its promises, as unaffected by its revelation of the wonderful love of God in Christ, as fast bound in worldliness, and as alien from the hidden life of the man of God, as if a Bible had never met his eye. The reason is, the word has never had "*entrance.*" It has been kept as a servant at the door, not received as a friend into the private house.

But not so with many an humble reader, though of far inferior furniture of knowledge and skill of interpretation, who "applies his *heart* to understanding;" searching the Scriptures "for hid treasures;" whose *affections* take hold on their chapters, whose hungering after righteousness digests their teaching; whose prayers obtain the help of the Spirit, that the truth may give him life. To him they are "all glorious within," their "vesture is of wrought gold." "Wondrous things" are in God's law, whoever reads it; but to none do they appear but to him who prays, "*Open thou mine eyes.*" That is the man who comes to know, by an evidence which cannot deceive, that the word *is of God*, because it does in him the works of God, and leads his heart unto God, and sheds abroad

*2 Cor. iii. 13–16.

therein the love of God. The entrance of the word gives him light, and that light giveth him life. "Thy word (said the Psalmist) have I *hid in my heart.*" And because he could say this, he could further say, "Thy testimonies have I taken as my heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart."

We come now, in the second place, to

II. The power of the word thus having entrance—"*It giveth light. It giveth understanding unto the simple.*"

The effect of the word on the day of Pentecost is the great, standing, comment on these words That day was the first of the new creation under the Gospel. A deeper moral darkness than that which then covered the earth, had never been known. A more hopeless people among whom to begin the effort of the word, than the Jews then at Jerusalem, could not be. More helpless agents than the laborers of that day, apostles of a Master recently crucified, and supposed by all that heard them to be still in death, we cannot imagine. But the word of their lips was not *their* word. "The Spirit gave them utterance" and gave it entrance. As they delivered the word, God commanded the light. And what a birth-day that was! what a new creation! Behold that great multitude—Jews out of all nations, hastening to the apostles to confess Christ and receive his baptism! Three thousand, in one day, brought to repentance, joyfully embracing the Gospel, forsaking all to follow Jesus! They come out of all the enmity and obduracy and unbelief of a people that have just been rejecting and crucifying with wicked hands that same Jesus. His blood is on their raiment, and the hatred of his gospel

was just now in their hearts. But see the new creation! Since the world began, there had not been such a manifestation of the power of God. All things in those three thousand hearts are become new—their views, their affections, their faith. They have put off the old man and put on the new man. All things are now counted loss for Christ. The shame of his cross is their glory; and in the city of his rejection and crucifixion, and before the rulers that slew him, they take their stand as his disciples, ready to die for his name. The entrance of God's word had given them great light, and the simplest among them, it had suddenly, in one day, made "wise unto salvation."

We look back to that day, as the day of days, intended for light to all subsequent days. Never can the word have a harder work to do than the work of that day; never can it attempt an entrance into a more impenetrable fortress of human pride and enmity; never can its missionaries encounter trials of faith more severe, or need the power of God more perfectly. There is nothing of the depth of Satan in "the Man of Sin," or in the strong entrenchments of the power of darkness among the heathen, or even in the awful atheism that is now coming in like a flood, that presents a mightier barrier against the word than did the mind of the Jews on the morning of that day.

We must not allow the encouragement thus derived to be impaired by the suggestion that the marvellous things of that Pentecost were miraculous, and that days of miracle are passed. True—the Spirit wrought miraculously in those that spake the word to give them utter-

ance in divers tongues, but not in those that heard to give them new hearts. It was an extraordinary operation of the Spirit that gave such manifest *witness* to the word in the speech of the Apostles. It was the ordinary, which is promised to the Church in all ages, that gave such abundant *entrance* to the word, and such *light* to its entrance.

Were the private history of the conversion of each man of that new-created host, unveiled to us, what striking attestations, under all variety of circumstances, should we read, to the light-giving power of the simple word, under the blessing of the Spirit! It was no eloquence or labored argument of the preacher that turned them. Not one of them ascribed his conversion to the miracle of the tongues, however *that* may have first arrested his attention. All he knew as the instrument of the power that wrought in him thus to will and to do, was the word he had heard concerning the crucified Jesus; and it was the very simplest statement of the word; not in any extended view, but only in a few Old Testament passages, with a little comment; and most likely, in many cases, it was but a single one of those testimonies that did the work with the conscience and heart.

Such has been the working of the word ever since that day. How often has a single verse, with wonderful grasp, arrested the careless sinner after he had been for many years an unmoved hearer, and taught him such views of the law of God and his transgressions, that he could not rest till he fled to Christ for refuge! And who shall fix the limit to this power of the word to give light to such wanderers, when we know it is God that, by

it, *shines in the heart?* Jesus fed the five thousand with a few barley-loaves. And what measure of saving light may he not pour into thousands of humble, seeking hearts, by a few words of his scriptures! David had but a small part of the Old Testament for that word which was his "meditation all the day." But with that little, God gave such light that David's religious experience has been the example of Christians of every age, and of the highest spiritual degree.

And this suggests the beautiful similarity of the spiritual image wrought by the light of the word, wherever, in any age or part of the earth, it has been received. A strong family likeness between the piety of the saints under all dispensations since Enoch walked with God, establishes their near relationship as children of the same Father, the workmanship of the same grace. Is it the spiritual character of Augustine in the fourth century, or of Luther in the sixteenth, or of Baxter, or Doddridge, or Venn, or Simeon, of England—or of Bedell or Milnor, in the new world; is it a work of the word on some humble daughter in the dairyman's cottage or the high and mighty in a king's palace; is it amid the refinements of your high places of learning or among the degraded victims of the vilest heathenism, that you trace the doings of the word? You see, in the piety it creates, innumerable varieties of minor details, with wonderful identity of ruling feature;—the great transformation everywhere the same, and everywhere ascribed to the same grace; the affections, the desires, the trust, the hope, the conflict the same; the same spiritual meat, like the manna of the desert, is the food of all; the same flowing

Rock of living water is the refreshment of all; the same Bible prayers and praises express the wants, and faith, and love, of all. Jesus is the joy of all.

But I must speak more particularly of that clause of the text, which says, that the entrance of God's words "*giveth understanding unto the simple.*"

I see in this an advance upon the previous statement; a more emphatic declaration of the power of the word. It means not only that its entrance giveth light, but that it *so* giveth light as to give understanding in the truth of God even "unto the simple."

Here let us pause a moment. In all efforts to promote the free circulation and universal reading of the Scriptures, and more and more in these days of the quickened efforts of Popery, we are encountered by a Church and by many who are harnessed in her traces, while they wear not her livery, telling us that the Bible is not for the simple; that instead of getting from it understanding, they can only pervert it to their own destruction; and indeed that to none is it a safe or edifying book, with which they ought to be trusted, but under particular guidance of a priest and the authoritative interpretation of that Church.

We answer, "The entrance of thy words giveth understanding *unto the simple.*" We affirm and may safely call the history of Bible reading to prove it, that there is not a doctrine of the gospel, a precept pertaining to God's service, a single consolation in Christ, a warning, an exhortation affecting the Christian life, that is not, in some at least of its forms of expression, as plain in the Scriptures to the simple, as to the learned, so making the

word, like the true Church, which, under God, it creates, *Catholic* word, open to all conditions of men, sent for all, suited to all, and not, as some who make a special boast of the *name* of Catholic would have it, a sealed book to all mankind, which only the traditions of ages, managed by a peculiar priesthood, could open and interpret.

That there are not high places in Scripture which only the ladder of studious learning may mount, we are far from teaching. But just as far are we from allowing, that on the scaling of those heights depends our knowledge of any great truth pertaining to Christian faith, or hope, or life. It is where the humblest may walk, that the "treasure hid in a field" is to be discovered; and while the man of great equipment may be looking too high to find it, the simple has already "sold all he has, and bought it," and enjoyed and loved it.

But of all pretenders to special light in understanding the Scriptures, and all claimants to your special submission to their interpretation, the church of Rome has the least reason to expect her claim to be acknowledged. Let her show, not that she has fathomed mysteries and mounted heights which the simple cannot reach, but that she has not most grossly darkened and perverted such plain and elementary teaching of the Scriptures as the simple and honest-minded cannot mistake. One would suppose that if words can make any teaching plain, it is the wording of the second commandment, as forbidding the bowing down to and worshipping graven images; or this, "*there is one God and one Mediator between God and man*," as expressly limiting our refuge to one only Mediator; or, "*the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from*

all sin," as freeing the believer in Jesus from all reason to apprehend any suffering for his sins in the world to come; or the simple words of the institution of the Lord's Supper, as incapable of having engrafted on them the monstrous blasphemy of transubstantiation or the idolatry of the mass. But what work have the interpretations of Rome made of these plain Scriptures! Call up the simple from any of your humblest ranks of Bible readers, and how easily will he show that in these things, either she hath no honesty to acknowledge, or no understanding to perceive the meaning of the word. Let her disband her army of mediators, and put out the fires of her purgatory, and reduce her pompous mass to the simplicity of the Christian sacrament as the Lord ordained it; let her pluck down and give to the moles and the bats her innumerable idols, her worshipped pictures and images, and dead men's bones; let her put on sackcloth and repent, before God and man, for the souls she has seduced, and the indignity she has done to God's commandment, by a grossness of idolatry which surpasses even that of heathen Rome; and then let her begin anew to learn in simplicity and godly sincerity the Holy Scriptures which are able to make even such a blind and perverted church wise unto salvation. Till then, let her not wonder if we think her incompetent to teach the plainest lessons of Christ, and would rather rely on the interpretations of the simplest reader of the Bible, whose conscience is undefiled by the known habit of disobedience to God's plain will, than on hers.

But we must remember that our text does not speak of the mere interpretation of the word, but also and

especially of its *spiritual discernment;* that which "the natural man," with all the aids of learning and of vigorous intellect cannot have, while the spiritually-minded peasant on his estate may be rejoicing therein; the discernment which draws the heart to the word, and applies the word to the heart with a subduing and sanctifying power, so that by it we come to know, not only the word, but Christ whom it is its great object to make manifest in our hearts. Let us also remember that in this spiritual discernment of the things of the Spirit, is contained all that God regards, as the true knowledge of himself, of his will, or his salvation in Christ; all other knowledge of his word being in his sight but as chaff in the comparison; that in his sight the simplest, having that one attainment, are of more understanding and of more dignity in his kingdom, and of more honor to his service, than if, without it, they had all faith, so as to remove mountains, and all learning, so as to expound all mysteries. Let us remember also that in the school of this spiritual discernment, the Spirit of God is the only teacher: that there is no respect of persons there; the way of promotion being just as easy and free to the simplest rustic, as to the most instructed and elevated ecclesiastic; humility, earnestness and prayer, being the only qualifications required.

Then remember that while God gives grace to the humble, he resists the proud; that while he gives more light to him who walks by what he has, he takes away his light from them that abuse it to works of darkness; remember also that the Apostle speaks of God's sending to those who have "pleasure in unrighteousness," "*strong delusion that they should believe a lie,*"* and further-

* 2 Thes. ii. 11, 12.

more that no "pleasure in unrighteousness" is more directly connected in Scripture with such awful punishment, than that which changes "the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like corruptible man," "worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator."* Then look how the Church of Rome finds not only her pleasure, but her enormous gains of "gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls," and all merchandize of pomp, and pride, and luxury, in that very unrighteousness of creature and image and picture worship, continually putting forth pretended miracles in its support, and arguments than which the *heathen* Romans had none worse for their idolatry; so that if ever the "Father's house" was "made a house of merchandize" in the traffic of an idolatrous priestcraft; if ever there wasa house of idols on earth, it is in that Church. And can that Church live? Will not God make good his word against the graven images?

Separate from all testimony of prophecy, can we doubt that "desolations are determined" on that rebellious city? Is there no voice from the desolations of ancient Babylon, telling what must be prepared for the modern? Can we forget those words—"Son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols. And I will set my face against that man, and I will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord."† Under the sound of these words, we ask, if the Church

* Romans i. 23, 28. † Ezekiel xiv. 3-5.

which they so awfully condemn, is to be allowed the arrogant claim of being exclusively the Temple of the Holy Ghost, where alone we can learn to "worship God in spirit and in truth;" where alone we are to learn his law and acquire the heart of a true obedience to his commandments? Can it be believed, that with a conscience so polluted by an evident, habitual, cherished iniquity, in such plain contempt of God's word, and bound, moreover, to its vindication, by her own most solemn decrees and her abounding spiritual merchandize, so that to renounce it, she must not only abandon a great source of her wealth, but humble herself to the lowest confession and self-abasement before God and man; can it be believed, that in her is to be found the spirit of meekness, and simplicity, and purity, and prayerfulness, for the interpretation of the very word which so denounces her favorite sin? Must she not, in self-defence, bar up her corridors against the entrance of that word which giveth light and understanding to the simple, lest even the most simple should find her out? If the Spirit may be grieved by any of you, so that he will strive with you no more, must he not be grieved by such an idolatrous Church, so that he will depart and leave it to wander on from sin to sin, and from darkness to darkness? Did God let Ephraim alone, because he was "joined to his idols;" and shall we suppose the same spiritual adultery will not produce the same spiritual abandonment of a Church that hath so abused a light of which Ephraim had scarcely the dawn? Oh! give me the most unlettered reader of the Bible, and let him only have simplicity, and singleness, and earnestness of desire to know and do the will of God, to know and

follow Christ, to know and abandon sin; let him be also a man of earnest prayer for the teaching of the Spirit, and he shall give you a far better interpretation of God's word as to all the vital matters of Christian life and hope, than is ever to come from a Church that is joined to her idols by decrees which she cannot annul without annihilating her proudest claims and humbling herself to the lowest abasement. He at least will know the truth, though it may be but its alphabet; while she certainly will deny the truth against which she is so permanently pledged.

Witness that man of God and bold soldier and apostle of the Reformation; a young man and simple in knowledge, finding in the dark and dust of his monastery that neglected, unknown Bible, reading and giving entrance at once to its word into his hungry heart—see how, as he reads, God giveth him understanding; how the mind of Luther is emerging out of the chaotic darkness of the darkest ages of the Romish Church, as that word giveth him light. But still his deliverance is not complete. See him now in "the holy city," going about in his own ignorance to establish his own righteousness by works of bodily penance. A single verse finds entrance into his burdened heart—"*The just shall live by faith.*" It scatters the night; it bursts his chains; it creates the great Reformer; it lays the corner-stone of the Reformation in the great corner-stone of the Gospel—*Justification by faith through the righteousness of Christ accounted of God to the believer.* Then began that great light, the revival of what ages of corruption had well nigh extinguished—the Protestant Reformation, to which, under God, we in this land

are so immeasurably indebted. Its whole life was the blessing of the Spirit of God on the unsullied Bible—the free reading, the simple teaching of the Bible. How wonderfully did its entrance at that period among the nations of Europe, long sitting in darkness, under the bonds, and superstitions, and idolatry of Popery, give them light! How wonderfully did it give understanding to the simple! What a glorious revival of gospel-faith and life appeared, in immediate connection with, and as the direct result, under the Holy Ghost, of the free publication and reading of his word! "The seed" was, and is, and ever shall be, *the word.* I know not a more perfect expression in a few words of the very heart and soul of the Protestant faith and work than that. "*The seed is the word,*" said the Lord, when his kingdom was as a grain of mustard seed. *The seed is the word,* said the intrepid Luther, when the kingdom had to be planted almost anew. *The seed is the word,* said those men of faith and love who founded our Bible Societies, that every family on earth might be possessed of the Scriptures. *The seed is the word,* say our diligent steam-presses, hastening to multiply copies of the Bible, and the many and various Protestant agencies in almost all lands, to spread and teach them, and the hundred and fifty or sixty languages and dialects in which Protestants are sending the Scriptures to Jew and Gentile, bond and free. *The seed is the word,* say all our Protestant Missionaries, making it their first effort when they go into a heathen land, or among the Jews, or where Romanism reigns and darkens the land, or among any people, to see that the Scriptures are in the hands of the people, in their own tongue wherein they were born.

The precise opposite is the very embodiment of Romanism. Not only is the word not the seed from which grows *that* tree, but she professes no such principle as would lead her to place any value on the dissemination of the Scriptures, no matter in what version or tongue.

Do Romish missionaries translate the Scriptures? How many of the versions now known are by the labors of such hands? Where is the land in which such laborers are known to be promoting, urging, facilitating the reading of the word? Need we say that such works have no part in the propagation of religion by the Papal hierarchy? that not only has she no desire that her people shall have free access to the Scriptures in their own vernacular tongue, but that she prohibits it where she can, under her severest penalties, and never allows it even in appearance, but where the time and the place make it impolitic to do otherwise? Search through the holy city, her vaunted centre of light and faith, for such a phenomenon as a Bible on sale; ask her mind on this subject, from the period of Wickliffe's translation of the Vulgate into English, or the burning of Tyndale's New Testament, or the epistle of the present Pontiff from his late retreat under the protection of Naples, addressed to the prelates of Italy, or the recent sufferings of God's people in the prisons of Tuscany. Should that dark power obtain the ascendancy it claims, and once had in all Europe, think ye that in this land, a single house would have in its own language the Book of God, but by express license of a priest; or that persecution for reading the Scriptures would not put on the same aspect as that which now makes that duty and privilege so criminal and perilous in Italy?

But why all this in a Church professing a Bible-faith and a Bible-mission? Why should it be more tolerable to Romish powers to read any book of vile licentiousness of morals, or lead a life of odious profligacy, than to read the Scriptures? You answer justly, it is the dread of their confronting testimony. It is the unclean spirit among the tombs, crying out: "What have I to do with thee—torment me not."

But there is another answer. Your Bible societies, your Missionaries translating and circulating the Scriptures; your zealous agents endeavoring to place a Bible in every house of every land, are stimulated by the one great principle that *the seed is the word—sanctification is through the truth—and the word is truth.* No, says Rome. The seed is the sacrament, not the word—sanctification is through the office of the priest, dispensing the grace of the Church. The truth, except just to bring you to the Church, and the priest, and the sacraments, has nothing to do with your sanctification. This is her great central principle. Here stands the citadel of her hopes. On this she plants her engines of war. By this she has drawn the millions of the ignorant and superstitious to her feet, and bound them in chains of iron, and made merchandize of them, and made herself rich in the traffic of her priest-craft. Take away this, and her power and wealth are ended. Nothing can be more directly at war with this, both in principle and operation, in the basis it goes on, and in the light it spreads in its march, than the great zeal which God has raised up in these days to translate and circulate the Scriptures. Nothing must Rome be expected more thoroughly to hate; nothing is she more bound by

her own principles, to destroy, as the very antagonism of herself, than our Bible societies, sending out to all people the Scriptures. I cannot imagine a spectacle more odious to the genuine spirit of the Romish system and priesthood, than such an institution as the British and Foreign Bible Society, so mighty in patronage, so vast in operation, so increasing in strength; its vast confederation of auxiliary societies; its great catalogue of translations; its issues amounting from its first days, to about twenty-seven millions of copies of the Scriptures—all because "*the seed is the word,*" and sanctification is "*through the truth.*"

Brethren, what an account we shall have to render for the use we make of the Scriptures! Do we give the word of God a free entrance to our hearts? "Behold! I stand at the door and knock." Do our hearts answer—Come in, thou messenger of God, minister of light and of blessing, come in to the secret place of my thoughts and affections; converse with me, admonish me, humble me, correct me, warn me, take away my hope, if it be not the good hope that maketh not ashamed, that I may seek a better; bring all that is within me into captivity to the obedience of Christ! The spirit which thus invites and welcomes the word of God, is the spirit that makes the wise, and the proud, and the great, to be the simple; and without which the poorest and most ignorant cannot be the simple ones, to whom the word of God will give the saving light. It is he that is a little child in such simplicity, whatever he be in strength of mind, in wealth or poverty of knowledge, in elevation or obscurity, who, by the light of God, and through the mediation of Jesus, will

enter into the kingdom. It is he who does not thus become as a little child, that can never enter that kingdom. Ah! how the want of that simplicity accounts for the difficulties which some men find in the Scriptures, and for the darkness that rests upon so many minds as to the true knowledge of God and of themselves, even after much reading of the Scriptures. The entrance of the word giveth understanding "*to the simple*," to "the poor in spirit," to them that are "followers of God as dear children," to them who "receive with meekness the engrafted word" and strive in the Lord's help, to be doers, as well as hearers or readers of its precepts. "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent (those who trust in their own understanding) and hast revealed them unto babes."

But one thing is carefully to be borne in mind. The power to give light is not in the word. As the word of truth, it can teach truth in the letter, but to teach it so that it shall be spiritually discerned, and so that the learner shall have that knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, which is life eternal, is the office of "the Spirit of truth," who is also "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus." The Holy Ghost is come for that very end—to lead us into all saving truth—into such views of it, that our hearts shall receive, and love, and rejoice in it, and adore the riches of divine grace made known therein. When he shines on the word, and into the heart of the reader by it, then its entrance giveth light. The Scriptures are then an illuminated mine full of precious things. Where the natural man walks unconscious of the riches around him, seeing nothing but the forms which contain

the hid treasures, the mind enlightened by the Holy Ghost beholds "wondrous things," and exclaims, "thy testimonies are wonderful;" "how love I thy law." But one thing is needful here. Prayer—Prayer! We must call upon God then, to enable us to use this word. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," must be our prayer. The need of God's help must be felt; the utter insufficiency of our own understandings spiritually to discern, must be felt. We must come to Jesus, the true light—and ask continually that his Spirit may be given to us. Read and pray; hear and pray—are exhortations founded on our need as truly as "watch and pray." "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding," is a condition of finding the knowledge of God, as much as "if thou incline thine ear," and "apply thine heart," and "seekest as for silver, and searchest as for hid treasures."

Brethren, do you thus feel your need of divine help in endeavoring so to use the word that, read or heard, it shall make you wise unto salvation? Do you thus call upon God to take of the things that are his, and show them unto you? The Lord give us all richly to experience the power of his Spirit, through the word, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory in Jesus Christ, and to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of his saints! Amen.

SERMON II.

THE TRUE CHURCH, THE WORLD'S LIGHT.

MATTHEW v. 14.

"Ye are the light of the world."

You will immediately recognize in these words a part of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. To whom were they addressed? To Ministers of his word, as such? We answer, that as yet he had not ordained his Apostles or Ministers. Some of those whom he afterwards ordained had now been called, with reference to their becoming his Apostles, and were now his followers; but as yet they were simply disciples. To whom then were these words addressed? The answer is in the first verse of the chapter. "Seeing the multitude, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set, *his disciples* came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying," &c. The text is part of what he then taught. So that it was to his *disciples*, as such, without particular reference to the office of the ministry, that he said "*ye are the light of the world.*" In this sense we shall use these words in this discourse, considering them as teaching all who profess to be disciples of Christ, what they are expected, individually, to be towards the world, according to their several positions and opportunities; teaching, also, what is the office and duty of that wide-spread community and relationship in which, under the name of his Church, the Lord

Jesus Christ, by the outward and visible bond of sacraments, has associated his professing people. To the whole visible Church, in all its several parts, as occupying different countries, cities and villages; to all the several individuals of which the Church is any where composed, ministers and laity, the Lord now addresses the words of the text, "*Ye are the light of the world.*" As thus addressed, without reference to the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of Christians, the steadfastness or the apostacy of any particular section of the visible Church, these words express simply what the Lord expects of all that are called by his name, individually and collectively—and what they will be, so far as they walk according to their high calling and profession. But they may grievously dishonor their calling. They may be Christians but in name and form. They may receive the grace of God in vain. If their lamps did ever burn, they may have quite gone out. Whole communities of nominal Christians may be in this state. Churches, once faithful, may have wholly departed from the faith, and still remain in name and form Christian Churches. Their duty is the same as ever, to be the light of the world; but they are only adding to its darkness and increasing its delusions.

Addressed to faithful, consistent, disciples of Christ, those who belong to that invisible, living Church, which is simply and exclusively the blessed company of all God's faithful people, under whatever name or form; the Church of the promises; the Church, which is the temple of the Holy Ghost, because in every one of its members is the Spirit of Christ; to that Church, the words of the text express not only what it ought to be, but what indeed it

is, "*the light of the world.*" All the spiritual light that ever shines on the world comes to it, under God, and by his appointment, through the instrumentality of the Church, thus viewed. And a time cometh, when, according to the promise of God, that blessed company shall be so enlarged, and in its various means and agencies shall so extend itself among all nations, and shall be made so mighty through the power of God abiding on it, that it will be literally light to all the world.*

If it require a strong faith in the promise of God to expect such a day, seeing what the Church now is; what faith must it have required when Jesus uttered the words before us? What a remarkable declaration it was, considering the time and circumstances! Never had a moral darkness so gross, so hopeless, covered the earth. Truth, concerning God and his will, seemed almost lost. The lamps in the golden candlestick of the Jewish Church had nearly all gone out. The Gentile world was all night. None then so much as dreamed of a power that could break that night. The wisest of heathen sages hoped for nothing better than a faint ray by which to see for themselves, but nothing for others. Jesus, on a mountain of Israel, has before him the little company of his disciples. Some are fishermen, all of obscure condition, all from a nation oppressed and despised by the rulers of the earth—it is the beginning of his Church. To that feeble band on the mountain top, he says, "*ye are the light of the world.*" How it must have astonished them! How in the infancy of their faith, it must have alarmed them, by the responsibility it involved! How impossible

* Isai. ch. lx.

it must have seemed, except as their minds took refuge in the power of God! It was as if Jesus had taken a straw and set it for a taper, and said, this shall give light to all nations. But "he spake as one having authority"—authority over all things to make good his word. In the beginning of the creation, it was he who "commanded the light to shine out of darkness," and suspended the sun in the firmament of heaven to be the light of our natural day. It was as easy for him, from that little beginning of disciples, to raise up a church which would prove the regeneration of the earth. And how marvellously were his words fulfilled! Before the last of that little company had finished his course, how literally had their ministry been made the light of the world. What nation was there which their labors had not penetrated; what fortress of the powers of darkness into which they had not carried their lamp; what cavern of iniquity out of which they had not led some children of night into the knowledge and peace of God?

Let that first wonderful work of the Church encourage us. Immense is still the reign of darkness in this world. Utterly without strength is the present Church, of itself, to overcome it. But now, as much as in the beginning, the Lord says to the blessed company of his faithful people, "Ye are the light of the world." Unbelief looks at *them*, and says *how can it be!* But faith looks unto Jesus, and remembering "the years of ancient time," says, Thou knowest. Thine is the power. Hast thou said, and shall it not be done? Zion will fulfill her destiny. "The righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness, and her salvation as a lamp that burneth." In the further exhibition of the text, let us consider,

I. The position and office here assigned to the Church of Christ on earth.

You remember how emphatically the Saviour asserted of himself, exactly what he here declares of his people: "*I am the light of the world.*"* These words indicate that Christ is the world's only light. And the similar words addressed to his people indicate that *they* are the world's only light. And how are these apparently contradictory declarations to be reconciled? We answer,

To this benighted world there is but one sun as the source of spiritual light. But he hath gone from the view of men and doth not shine directly upon the world. There are intermediate agencies, secondary lights; there are planets and satellites; there is a system of dependent and associated instruments, which keep their circuit around that great central orb, held therein only by his power, and shining only in his light. Perfectly dark in themselves; only as they receive light from him are they the light of the world. Thus the Church, in its ministry, and in all the life and works of its people, is to Christ, what moon and planets are to the sun. The world receives from them, as they receive from Christ. They are the light of the world as the only *visible* light. He is the light of the world as the only *original* light. And thus we harmonize the two declarations. Of himself Jesus speaks as the author and giver. "I am the light." To his Church, he speaks as his constituted instrument and medium. "Ye are the light."

This is not an illustration of our own invention. It is precisely that of the Scriptures. The prophet Isaiah, addressing Zion, says, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come,

*John viii. 12.

and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* John, in the opening of the Apocalypse, beheld in vision a representation of the churches, under the emblem of "seven golden candlesticks," *instruments* of light but not its *containers*. In the midst of them "there walked one like unto the Son of Man, whose countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." From him came the light which seemed to dwell on the lamps of those candlesticks. In his hand were seven stars; as the sun holds the planets before his face, that he may shine on them, and by them on the world. And these stars, John was told, represented the ministry of the churches. †

But the most remarkable use of this method of illustration is in another part of the Revelation of St. John. He beheld, and "there appeared a great wonder in Heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars."‡

Among interpreters of the Apocalypse, there is entire agreement that under this symbolic appearance is represented the true Church on earth, in its purity and faithfulness, doing its appropriate work in the world, and holding its proper relation to Christ. This is evident from the children of the woman being described as those "which keep the commandment of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ."‖ Now observe the description. The ornament of her head was a crown of stars. Under her feet was the shining moon. Thus was indicated the Church's office as a light-bearer to the world, but only a *bearer*, not the fountain; the medium, not the origin; as

* lx. Isai. 1. † Rev. i. 12-20.

‡ Rev. xii. 1. ‖ Verse 17. The Church is called "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." Rev. xxi. 9.

the moon and planets are only the reflectors by which the unseen sun casts his radiance on the earth. But whence came the light of *that* moon and *those* stars? She was "*clothed with the sun.*" In that all-investing light, she was all light; her head, her feet, her raiment, all did shine as the sun. I need not tell you that the sun thus investing the Church, represents him whose countenance John beheld "as the sun shineth in his strength," and whose proclamation is, "I am the light of the world." But that bright form was seen, where all luminous bodies, whose office it is to shine on this earth, are stationed, in the firmament of heaven. The vision, therefore, whatever other instructions it was intended to give, is an impressive exhibition of the great office of the Church on earth, and of what a faithful Church must be; the bearer of the knowledge of Christ to all people—*the light of the world.*

But in order to set forth the more distinctly this striking representation of the faithful Church, let me turn your attention, by way of contrast, to another symbol in the Revelation of St. John, of a Church, but a *fallen* Church.

Nothing can be more evident than that the Scriptures, especially the epistles of St. Paul, and the Apocalypse of St. John, contain predictions, in very impressive terms, of a great apostacy from the truth and spirit of the Gospel, which after the Apostolic age would appear in the visible Church; an apostacy which, taking its rise at a very early period, and growing from age to age in stature and development, would at length assume a shape and position of great prominence and power. It would subdue to its dominion, by signs and wonders, by seductive delusions,

or terrific persecutions, a large part of the professedly Christian world. It would put forth the most arrogant and exclusive claims to dominion and authority. It would usurp the prerogative of God; and sit in his Church as if if it were God, changing his laws, absolving from their obligation, substituting its own. It would be especially marked as a persecutor of the children of the faithful Church, of those who, rejecting its unauthorized commands and testimonies, should "keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ."* You find such a prediction in the second chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians. Those Christians had been troubled in mind, concerning the second coming of Christ. Paul writes to them thus: "Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come, except there come *a falling away first,* (an apostacy) *and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition,* who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." The temple here means, of course, the Christian Church. Sitting therein as God, means, claiming dominion and authority in the Church as God. This "Man of sin," Paul next called "the *mystery of iniquity,*" and said it had even in his time begun to work, (v. 7.) Its coming, he said, would be "*after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.*" It would continue until the second coming of Christ and would be destroyed thereby.

* See Dan. vii. 20, 21, 25, compared with Rev. xvii.; see also 2 Thess. ii. 3-10; and 1 Tim. iv. 1-3.

"*Consumed*," saith the Apostle, "*by the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed by the brightness of his appearing.*" (v. 8.) Daniel, predicting the same Man of Sin, under the symbol of a great ecclesiastical ruler, says, "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws."*

But what we find in St. Paul, under the names of the "Man of Sin," and "Mystery of Iniquity," St. John, in the Apocalypse, exhibits under another form. The faithful Church is the Bride of Christ. He has already exhibited it under the form of a woman arrayed in the light of the Lord as her wedding garment, and crowned therewith as her glory. He now exhibits, under the like form, but far other raiment, an apostate Church, which pretends to be the Bride of Christ. Let me give you his description: "I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns, and the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations; and upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH; and I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints and of the martyrs of Jesus." Her throne was upon "many waters," which were interpreted to St. John as representing "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues," a vast dominion of nations.† Now that all these predictions indicate a great Church apostacy, is too universally understood among the

* Dan. vii. 25.

† Rev. xvii. 3–6 and 15.

learned, as well Romish as Protestant, to need any argument.* We have no time, nor has it anything to do with our present object, to attempt a particular interpretation. But we are speaking of the faithful Church as the light of the world, and we wish to illustrate that aspect by the contrast of an apostate Church. Let us then compare the two as exhibited in the two symbols of the Apocalypse. Each is represented under the form of a woman. One is the true bride of Christ, the other only a pretender to that character. Both are magnificently apparelled. But how vast the difference in the style of their adorning! The true bride is arrayed in the simplicity, and purity, and heavenly beauty of *the light;* clothed with the splendor of the sun; the crescent moon as a sandal adorns her feet; a circle of stars is the ornament of her brow. Nothing but shining light is her glory, as becomes the symbol of that which is ordained to be the light of the world. The other is gorgeously apparelled, indeed, but her ornaments are all earthly, such as worldly pride and pomp put on; the meretricious beauty of scarlet, and purple, and precious stones, and gold, such as kings of the earth have given her, and the "peoples and multitudes," over whom she rules, are attracted by; as poor a substitute for a vesture and crown of light, as paste for the genuine pearl.

Again: in the symbol of the faithful Church we see a constant glorying in Christ alone. The light that adorns her is not her own; she is clothed with the sun. Every ray of her glory tells you whence it comes and whom it glorifies,—Jesus, the Son of God, whom it is her single

* "All the ancient expositors agree in identifying these prophecies with some heretical Church."—*Wordsworth on the Apocalypse.*

office to make known to the world, as planets testify of the absent sun by which they shine. But the other, what a contrast! There you see no reference to any but herself; no indication of dependence on the glory of another; no light leading you to seek elsewhere its source. All is put on to attract the praise of men, instead of directing them to Christ. She glorifies herself;* self-exaltation is the prominent aspect of the apostate Church. Her voice is, "I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow,"† and I claim the obedience of all nations unto myself. But the voice of the faithful Church is: I stand as a lamp, shining in the light of my Lord, to testify unto and glorify him, that all may look unto him and be saved.

Again: from every thing in the position and aspect of the woman representing the faithful Church, whose children "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus," you see that she is occupying precisely the place, and doing the work, which the Lord has appointed to his Church. John beheld her "*in heaven*," among the constellations, where God in the beginning placed the lights, "to rule over the day and over the night." From that position she receives the direct rays of the sun, and reflects them on a world shrouded in darkness. Her office is that of a light-bearer to the world. In it is her whole glory; all her jewelry is light—she is shod with it, crowned with it, clothed with it—none of it her own; all from the sun. Take away that light, and she hath nothing left of any beauty. Beautiful representation of that blessed company of the children of God, who, walking by faith, see him who is invisible; and setting

* Rev. xviii. 7. † Ibid.

their affections on things above, have their conversation in heaven, and their "life hid with Christ in God," and are changed into his image, and thus become the living surfaces in which he reflects himself, and the active agents by which his truth is spread in the world. But not such the position in which St. John saw the woman representing the *fallen* Church. She was not in heaven, among the stars of light, but on earth, "*in the wilderness.*" There she was sitting, not in banishment, or under constraint, but on her throne, in all her power, in all her blazonry and pomp. It was her chosen place, and it indicated that instead of the light of the world, she was its desolation; where she reigns in her glory, there is a spiritual wilderness, and the light of Christ doth not come. Behold, then, that impressive and awful figure, as St. John has pictured it. How would you ever obtain the idea from all her aspect, that it is the great office of the Church of Christ, which she professes to be, to enlighten the world, to be the active carrier and distributer of the light of Christ to men? Where, in her position in the wilderness, in her raiment and ornaments, in the throne she sits on, and the name she wears on her forehead, and the cup she holds out to the world, is there a feature or sign that says any thing of light? "*Ye are the light of the world,*" saith the Lord to his Church, and the woman representing the Church that answers to those words, is all a reflection of light. But in the symbol of the fallen Church, there is not the least sign of light received or reflected. Instead of the clothing of the sun, we see the poor substitute of purple, and scarlet, and gold, and precious stones; intelligible signs, indeed, of worldly pride and pompous luxury;

of loving the praise of men more than the praise of God; of living unto one's self instead of unto Christ; of reliance for influence on outward and earthly attractiveness, instead of intrinsic holiness. But they say nothing of LIGHT; much of darkness. Brilliants are worn to sparkle on the wearer, not to irradiate the observer. They well express the spirit of an apostate Church, glorying in worldly greatness; seeking to win the regards of men by impressions on the senses, and through the avenues of worldly tastes and dispositions; but they say nothing of the great office of the Church in the "*manifestation of the truth*" as it is in Jesus. To sit enthroned on a ten-horned wild beast,* is significant of conquest and cruelty, and of extending ecclesiastical dominion, by force, but not by truth. The whole combination is an apt symbol of secular potentates sustaining the arrogant claims and persecuting oppressions of some great ecclesiastical power; but "*ye are the light of the world,*" would read very strangely were it written on such a rider and such a bearer.

Then that golden cup in the woman's hand, full of abominations! It reminds us of the name "BABYLON" on her brow, for it is written in Jeremiah, "Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand that made all the earth drunken." It is a striking name, especially as connected with every thing else in the vision, for intoxicating delusions and fatal seductions, for poisonous moral corruptions, as attributes and acts of the mission on which the great apostacy goes out among the nations, "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness," as Paul describes.

* The original word signifies a *wild* beast, one that inhabits desert places, fierce and hurtful.

But a cup of abominations contains no light of life, no testimony of Christ.

Then that name on her forehead, "MYSTERY." It reminds us of St. Paul's name for the same apostacy, "*Mystery of Iniquity.*"* It teaches us that in it are "the depths of Satan," as in the Gospel are "the deep things of God." It speaks of a mysterious concealment of truth, instead of its publication all abroad. It speaks of an effort to attract reverence by being veiled and keeping things in the dark; of making mystery of all rites and benefits, as magicians do with their incantations, and as counterfeit physicians with their remedies; it speaks of this being as conspicuous an attribute of the apostate Church, as the crown of light of the faithful Church. Light reveals,—mystery hides. Light opens the book of the knowledge of Christ, and says to all men, READ. Mystery shuts the book and puts it under her robe and says, You must not read; it is not for common eyes. Only the privileged may be trusted therewith.

Then that other name, "BABYLON THE GREAT," written also on her forehead. It reminds us, by way of contrast, of the promise to God's faithful people. "*His* name shall be in their forehead." And again, "I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is *New Jerusalem.*† Ah! yes, *Jerusalem!* But here the name written is that of the old Pagan enemy of Jerusalem, her persecutor, her destroyer, that led her children into captivity, and slew her prophets, and profaned her sanctuary, and took away her golden candlestick with the sacred vessels of her

* 2 Thess. ii. 7. † Rev. iii. 12; xxii. 4.

sacraments, and set them in the house of her idolatry, and used them in the feasts of her idols. How remarkable to find the hand of inspiration writing the name of that old Pagan city of abominations upon the forehead of a Church, calling itself the Church of Christ! Yes, *Babylon* for *Jerusalem;* the destroyer of the people of God, for "*the mother of us all.*" But so it is. It is a terrible brand, indeed. It tells of grievous oppressions, of the desolations of God's sanctuary, of internal debasements, connected with hideous idolatries. It brings to mind the river of Babylon, by the side of which the captive Jews sat down and wept when they remembered Zion. It recalls the words of Jeremiah: "Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling place for dragons, an astonishment and an hissing, without an inhabitant."* But how would it sound to say to that Church thus written on, *thou art the light of the world;* the faithful bride of him who is the Light of life. How great the relief to turn from that sad and awful spectacle, to the symbol of the true bride, on whose brow, instead of such names of apostacy, is written in heaven's own sweet light, upon a coronet of stars, *Teacher of the word of God to all people.*

But that great Church apostacy, so remarkably predicted and prefigured in the Scriptures, *where is it? has it yet appeared?* You will not think it very probable that an apostacy, the leaven of which St. Paul said had begun to operate even in his time,† and which he assured us was to grow into the gigantic stature of that "Man of Sin," whose attributes he described, has not yet, during

* Jer. li. 37.
† "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." 2 Thess. ii. 7.

the progress of eighteen hundred years, been sufficiently matured to be seen and known. Where then will you find it? Under what Church form is it seen? For evidently it is not a mere defection of *individuals*, however many, but of a Church, in its corporate principles and life. I shall not answer this question directly—but I will do better. I will assist you to answer it for yourselves.

What then is the light which the Church is ordained to diffuse? The knowledge of God and his will, of Christ and his salvation. Under what outward form does the Church receive and possess that light? Your ready answer is, Under the form of *the word of God.* The Psalmist says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple."* The Philippian Christians were "lights in the world" by "holding forth the word of life."

Then if the word of God is the light which the Church is ordained to diffuse, it only remains to ask, how is the Church to be the light of the world? You answer easily: It is by doing to all the world what the Philippians did in the midst of their perverse nation: *holding forth every where the word of life.* Changing the figure, from the diffusing of light, to the sowing of seed; we read in the parable of the sower, that the world being the great field on which the fruits of holiness and spiritual life are to be grown, the seed, the only seed, which God has provided to be sown therein is *the word,* and the work of the Church is to sow that seed *in all the world.* From nothing else can spiritual life be made to grow.

* Ps. cxix. 105, 130.

One more question: Under what form does the Church possess the word? IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, answers every Christian people. "Search the Scriptures," said our Lord. "They are they which testify of me." This he said, not to the Jewish priests, but to *the people.** It follows then that the great office of the Church on earth, as the light of the world, is to make known the word; not to make a *mystery* of it, but a *manifestation;* to publish it to all people—sound it from the house-tops; proclaim it on the mountains; put it into all languages; sow it broadcast, like the sower in the parable, that went forth to sow; so that though some seed should fall on the wayside, and some on the rock, and some among thorns, some at any rate may find the good ground, and spring up and bring forth fruit. It follows further, that one of the great means of thus making known the word to all people, is to make known to them that book in which God has written it, and which we are commanded to search. Nothing can be more directly incumbent on the Church's office as a light-bearer to the world, than the publication of the Scriptures in all languages, and their distribution to all men, and the effort to persuade all men to search them for the testimony of Jesus, the will of God, and the Gospel of our salvation.

Thus I have given you one of the means of answering the question as to where the apostacy described is to be found. Can you find a Church that has fallen from her proper place and office as a publisher of the light of God's word to the world? Can you find a Church which not only is not engaged in the free circulation of the Scriptures, but, in its essential principles, denies that there

* John v. 39, compared with verses 15, 16, 17.

is any necessary or important connection between the knowledge of the Scriptures and the growth of religion; which makes *the seed* to be *not the word*, and claims to be able to do the entire work of the Church, though all but her own chief priests be wholly destitute of the Scriptures? Can you find a Church in whose dominions, in proportion as you approach the centre of her power and the fullness of her glory, where her chief seat is, and where her ornaments and jewels are best seen, and her consistency is least hindered, you find the greatest dearth and ignorance of the Scriptures, so that *where she is most, the Bible is least?* Can you find a Church which in her missions among the heathen makes no effort to introduce the Scriptures among the people, makes no translations of the Bible into their tongues, feels no need of such auxiliaries, does all the work of her missions without the Scriptures? Can you find a Church which, instead of seeking to convince and persuade by manifestation of the truth, substitutes her own authority and power, and not merely does not set an open Bible before the world and say *come and read*, but shuts the book and writes upon it "*mystery*," and takes it out of sight, and says You must not read; it is enough if certain privileged ones shall read? Do you know a Church which, in countries where she has ascendancy enough to venture so far, concentrates her whole authority and vigilance upon keeping the people from the free searching of the Scriptures; fences up her territories against their entrance as against a pestilence, no matter in what version, Protestant or Romish, they come; employs an active police in the zealous search after any that induce men to read the

Bible, or that venture, in the secret chamber, to refresh a weary spirit from that water of life; dragging them for that one only crime to chains and prisons and galleys, to the company of felons and the sufferings of martyrs, fearing nothing so much for her dominion, and strength, and wealth, as the free searching and universal circulation of the word of God? Find a Church in which these eminent peculiarities are exhibited, not merely in many of her members, but in her corporate authorities; not as accidents of a certain age or region, but as ordinances and laws, proceeding directly from her essential principles, inseparably connected therewith, and which she cannot deny till she denies herself; and then, by those marks, independently of many others that might be given, you will have found out the *seat* of the woman that is *not* "clothed with the sun;" and hath *not* the testimony of the Apostles, as a crown of twelve stars upon her head; whose adorning, and power, and glory, are not of God, wherever else they may have come from: "The Mystery of Iniquity" of St. Paul, "The Babylon" of the Apocalypse.*

* The recent persecutions in Italy, for the single crime of reading the Scriptures, must open the eyes of many to what all who know the history, or understand the doctrinal system of the Church of Rome, have always known, that actually and doctrinally she forbids, and in consistency must forbid, the free reading of the Scriptures, and only relaxes her practice in that particular where her dominion is not sufficiently established to warrant the full carrying out of her principles. But Cardinal Wiseman has recently been bold enough to be sufficiently plain on that head. In his "*Catholic Doctrine for the Use of the Bible,*" lately published, he says, "The Bible is more difficult to understand than any other book. No Greek classic, no Arabian or Persian Poet, no Hindoo mystic is more abstruse." (p. 13.) Of course then the Church of Rome does not say to the people, "*Search the Scriptures,*" but *Jesus* did. The Cardinal must refer chiefly to the Old Testament for the difficult parts. But when Jesus said "Search the Scriptures," the people had only those parts. But the Cardinal again: (p. 25.) "In Catholic countries, such as can read or

Oh! it is a consolation indeed to remember that we belong to a Church, the essential principle of which is, that sanctification is by *the truth;* that the seed of all spiritual

do read, have access to the *Latin* version without restraint." The *Latin* version for the people! "If a son ask bread, will he give him a stone?" What better is the Latin version to people that cannot read Latin? But the Cardinal again: (p. 26.) "Though the Scriptures may be permitted, we do not urge them on our people; we do not encourage them to read them." Of course you do not urge people to read the Latin version, when they know nothing of the Latin tongue. But Jesus not only encouraged but urged: "*Search the Scriptures;*" and Paul commended the Bereans because they "*searched the Scriptures daily;*" Acts, xvii. 2. But the Cardinal further states, (p. 25,) that where the Church permits "the reading of Scripture, she does not permit the *interpreting.*" Wonderful privilege! First, it is a Latin version, and then the few who can read that, though they are not *encouraged* to do it, but only not forbidden, *must not interpret;* that is, must not attempt to find out the meaning! A lamp they are permitted to hold in hand, but must not walk by it? They may read, for example, "Come unto me all, ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" but they must not interpret that sweet and plain invitation of grace. The Bereans had the privilege of listening to an intepreter of the Scriptures, as infallible, perhaps the Cardinal will grant, as the Pope; even St. Paul. But even then "*they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things* (which he taught) *were so;*" and Paul praised them for it. Did they read *without interpreting?*

By this prohibition to interpret, the exceedingly liberal allowance of the *Latin* version is made practically a nullity, even to a Latin reader. It is time, therefore, for the Cardinal to be more candid. Next, therefore, he confesses that the Romish Church is *opposed* to the free reading of the Scriptures. "If (he says, p. 20,) we be asked why we do not give the Bible indifferently to all, and the shutting up of God's word be disdainfully thrown in our face, we will not seek to elude the question, or meet the taunt by *denial*, or by endeavoring to prove that *our principles* on the subject are not antagonistic to those of Protestants. *They are antagonistic, and we glory in avowing it.*" We trust then we shall hear no more of the denial of this avowed antagonism; we have had enough of it. The *principles* of the Romish Church are most certainly *directly antagonistic, as to the reading of the Scriptures by the people, to the principles of Protestants.* Then, if out of "Catholic countries" Romanists are ever allowed to read any but a Latin Bible, let it be remembered it is not according to the *principles* of the Romish Church, but against them, and because a surrounding Protestantism requires that measure of concession *for the present*, and when Popery shall be sufficiently in the ascendant it will cease. Who can doubt this when he reads the Cardinal, at p. 15, as follows: "The experiment has been tried on a great scale of what the indiscriminate reading of the Bible will make a people. It has been tried in the dominions of Queen Pomare with unexampled success. It has transformed a mild and promising

life in the world is *the word;* that the knowledge of the Scriptures is essentially connected with the propagation of the Gospel; that to persuade men to search the Scriptures as the testimony of Jesus, is a great duty of her ministry; that to spread the knowledge of the Bible is the way by which the Church is to be the light of the world. It is a great consolation to think of the institutions, under the name of Bible Societies, which band together such a vast array of the numbers, and wisdom, and influence, and wealth of Protestant Christians in the single work of printing the Scriptures for circulation among all people, and whose issues are already many millions. It is delightful to think of the vast and mighty system of agencies, from the great publishing centres, to all the ramifications of missionaries, and zealous lay distributers and scripture-readers, so exclusively connected with Protestant Churches and the result of Protestant principles, whose object is to place the pure word of God in every language, in every house, and to encourage, and urge, and aid all people to read the same. It is the glory of Protestant missionaries, that always their first work in a dark land, is to get the Scriptures as soon as possible into the language of the people; to make the Bible an open book to them, by making it speak in their tongue, and by teaching them to read it;

race into a pack of lazy, immoral infidels." The Cardinal is emphatic. The Bible, *God's word*, by the simple reading of it, has made a heathen people a great deal worse! How it has made *infidels* of heathens, we do not understand. We supposed they had always been infidels. But the assertion is, that what our Lord commanded us to search, and Paul praised the Bereans for searching daily, and Timothy was commended for knowing in his childhood, has been thus destructive to the morals, &c. of the subjects of Queen Pomare. Of course, then, the principles of the Romish Church PROHIBIT the Scriptures. Can they permit the word of God to be read, if they think it so poisonous? The Cardinal will be believed.

thus clothing their work at once "*with the sun*," and seeking to "shine as lights in the world," like the Philippian Christians of old, by "holding forth the word of life."

More and more may all such work and zeal increase among us. It is evidence of the true and living Church. It is the garment of praise; it is the terror of the powers of darkness; it is Jerusalem against Babylon.

II. And now, from the view we have taken of the position and office of the Church of Christ in this world, let me very briefly deduce a few of the important lessons contained therein.

1. The great duty of the Church, in all her agencies and operations, is to be a preacher and a witness of Christ. He is the true light. To know him is life eternal. To make him known to the world by his word is to be the light of the world. To be clothed with the testimony of Jesus, so that every aspect of the Church directs the eye of the sinner unto him, so that all her beauty and value are sought in the faithfulness of that her proper testimony, is for the Church to be clothed with the sun. As that testimony becomes obscure; as any Church declines from the directness, and fulness, and constancy of that manifestation of Christ; as she gets to glorying in some other wisdom, and seeking some other praise, and putting on some other raiment, she wanders from her orbit; she falls from her sphere; she loses life; she becomes darkness instead of light to the world; she may retain the whole form and ordinance of the visible Church, but in spirit and life she may be utterly apostate.

2. The Church must seek her whole power to do her appointed work, in the constant renewal upon herself of the

light and life of Christ. The moon and planets are no *depositories*, they are only *reflectors* of the light of the sun. Arrest for a single moment their communion with that central power, and they are perfect darkness. They must be clothed with the sun, by renewal, every instant. Thus must the Church continually be receiving from Christ. She can lay up nothing in store. Her office is that of a reflector. Her face must be always looking unto Jesus. What she was in the Apostles' times was no security for what she would be in future times. The seven Churches of Asia were particularly represented in "the seven candlesticks" which John beheld, and in the midst of them walked the Son of Man, as the sun shineth in his strength. But now what are they? The Church of Rome was once so faithful that St. Paul testified that its faith was spoken of throughout the world.* What is it now? Just as each individual believer must be constantly renewing his spiritual life by communion with Christ, "who is our life," must the whole Church, which is but the aggregate of all believers, be receiving again directly from the fountain of its being, that replenishment of life, without which, though it keep all the form of a Church, it can have only a name to live; and that renewal of spiritual light, without which, however the word of God may be in its hands, it will not profit thereby, nor make use of it for the good of the world, nor exhibit any example to lead men to God.

3. It is not merely in a *corporate* capacity, but by combination of the faithfulness of individual Christians, in their several spheres and relations, and in the use of their several talents, that the Church is to be the light of the world. The holiness of the Church is simply the aggregate

*Rom. i. 8.

of the personal holiness of its several members. All other holiness is but relative and ceremonial. Such also is the light of the Church. Its ministry is of no avail to fulfill its great work, but as each minister is faithful. Its whole body of people can do nothing for the world, but as each congregation, and each member of each congregation, is faithful in his own individual stewardship. The Church at Philippi was composed of Christians who in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation shone "*as lights* in the world"—as many lights as there were Christians—each doing his individual work in union with all the rest. And thus the Philippian Church altogether was a light in the world. What that one Church was, all Christians are required to be. They are styled "children of the light." "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." As that path ascends in holiness, and gets more above the world, and nearer to God, it becomes the more a shining light. All members of the Church have not the same office, but they have essentially the same work, the same interest, the same essential relation to the Lord and the world. The Church is a communion, not only of brothers, but of laborers; not only in the hope of salvation, but in the privilege of spreading the knowledge of it, and of multiplying the number of those who partake therein. We are all to be "workers together with God." It is the heritage of each disciple of Christ to be permitted to "*occupy*" the place and stewardship which his Master has assigned him, so that when his Lord cometh, he may say of that disciple, however humble his lot, "*I am glorified in him.*" How much each may do, none can

say, because results depend on God, and the magnitude of a work is so little to be measured by its outside appearances or visible connections, and so much is added to the visible deed by the unseen faith, and love, and prayer that attend it; and because that which seems least to our eye may be a seed from which the Lord will raise harvests of fruit in all generations. Who knows but that the conversion of Saul was an answer to the prayer of Stephen when he prayed for his persecutors? What was the connection between the faithfulness of a certain pious mother diligently instructing her son in the Holy Scriptures,* and the subsequent wide usefulness of that son when he became Paul's own son in the faith, the beloved Timothy, the instrument, under God, of making many wise unto salvation? It is apparently a little thing to the darkness of the great world, that a single Christian, in a very humble sphere, and with little worldly means and influence, should set the example of purity, and holiness, and undeviating consistency of life; should manifest the practical influence and blessedness of the Gospel in all his spirit, and temper, and conversation, in the government of his household, in the spirituality of his mind, in his love of things above, in the application of Christian principles to all the relations of social life, in the conscientious use of his pecuniary substance for the relief of human suffering, and the promotion of the Gospel; it seems little that such a Christian should in his prayers be earnestly beseeching God to send laborers into his harvest, and to pour out his Spirit on the Church, and to establish his kingdom in the whole earth. But no. It is the way;

* 1 Tim. i. 2; 2 Tim iii, 14, 15.

God's appointed way. The eye cannot say to the foot, nor the rich to the poor, nor the strong to the weak, nor the learned to the most ignorant, nor the whole Church to its least member, "I have no need of thee." In the vision of St. John, the woman had a crown of twelve stars on her head, but her whole body, *every member*, was clothed with the sun. Beautiful, at night, is that broad girdle of light which spreads through the firmament, composed of innumerable distinct points of radiance, but each so minute to our view, that none can be distinguished from all the rest. So does each humble faithful follower of Christ, living in the light of his Lord, contribute his part to the whole office of the Church; too obscure to be distinguished; too precious to be dispensed with.

4. Lastly, the Church will discharge its duty to the world only so far as each of its several sections or congregations shall be faithful to its own locality and neighborhood. And this brings me, brethren, to the happy services of this day, in which all the cares, and anxieties, and toils, and burdens, connected with the progress of this noble edifice, now solemnly consecrated to the worship and word of God, have so joyfully terminated.* Having followed your efforts with the liveliest interest, from your first incipient measures, through all your trials and discouragements, to the present hour, with a sympathy much more intimate than you might have expected from my official relation to you, I have admired the determined perseverance with which, in the face of great difficulties, you have gone on, not only to complete, but

* Preached at the consecration of St. John's Church, Cincinnati, Feb. 9, 1854.

also to relieve from incumbrance, this House of Prayer, so good, so spacious, so appropriate, as well as beautiful, in all its parts and furniture. And now that it is occupied with a fixed congregation, in which the minister of God may be well content to lay out all his efforts for their eternal good, and that in him who occupies towards you that responsible position, you are so richly blessed with a most faithful and earnest preacher of Christ and pastor of the flock (whom may God long spare and you long possess); I desire to take my part with you in a thankful acknowledgment of the good hand of the Lord in these mercies; in feeling that it was He who gave what we have this morning consecrated to his service; and in supplication that all that has been expended here, and all that shall be enjoyed here, may ever be to the glory of his grace, in the increase of his kingdom everywhere.

But now, my brethren, after the special services of this occasion, the question naturally arises, what will God, who has placed you in this house to profit by all the privileges of his grace, and who has thus brought you together as a communion and congregation, *what will He have you to do?* What return, what fruit does He expect? How much has your power to do good been increased by your present associated condition! How much ability to do good was previously possessed among the individuals composing this congregation, all of which is enhanced and made as a city set on a hill by this union under this roof! Now there is a design in this. God has a purpose in forming congregations. What is it here? Brethren, will you satisfy that purpose in being content just to occupy your places here at the stated times, and join in the worship

and listen reverently to the word of God; or, if you do more, and spiritually improve your privileges here, so as to grow in grace, and so that the number of God's true people shall be increased among you? Will that be enough? Is this congregation and communion, set up of God in the midst of this rapidly enlarging population, in the midst of so much darkness, so much wickedness, so much unbelief, in the midst of multitudes that are without God and without hope, is it only for the spiritual good and enjoyment of those who belong to it? Is a light-house erected merely to give light within? or to cast the beams of hope upon surrounding darkness and dangers, and lead the wandering and lost from afar off into the way of safety? Such is God's will with regard to you. You belong to that great community on which the Lord has laid the duty of being the light of the world. Ye must take your part in those great works of Christian effort which limit their benevolence only by the limits of the world. But especially must you realize your responsibility as connected with the spiritual necessities of the world immediately around you. We must not be content in this growing city, with our present churches, and ministers, and Sunday schools, and other agencies for good-doing. As fast as possible must they be increased in number and extension. Sin, crime, neglect of God and his word, the profanation of his holy day; infidelity, zealous and bold, indigenous and foreign, seeking proselytes just where the want of the means of grace is greatest; a hundred forms of spiritual darkness and want are fearfully increasing in power and diffusion around us, and all Christian people have greatly to increase their efforts

if they would keep up with the fast increasing demand upon their zeal. Thus far you have begun well. Your Sunday schools, your Bible classes, your contributions to good works of various kinds, to the distribution of the Scriptures, and of tracts, to the support of colporteurs carrying the printed word where other agencies do not reach, to the maintenance of missionaries at home and abroad, all speak most encouragingly for the future influence and good-doing of this recently organized flock. Go on, brethren, to put your talents daily to the best investment. Ability increases with exercise. Talents are ascertained by use. Blessings multiply, as blessings are improved. In what particular ways you are to work I cannot here specify. I aim now simply at stirring up the conscientious inquiry, what the Lord will have you to do, individually and collectively, as a leaven, as a light, in the midst of the population of this city. The glory of a Church is to have the light of Christ, and by it so to shine in holiness and good works, that sinners may be led to Christ for eternal life. Be that, as long as these walls shall stand, the glory of the Church that shall worship here. Here may the precious Gospel of Christ be ever preached in purity and faithfulness, and be accompanied "with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power!" Here may the riches of divine grace be gloriously manifested in the conversion of multitudes of wandering sinners to the faith and hope of Christ, and in their growing meetness for his presence! Here may many a desolate heart be made the temple of the Holy Ghost! To this house may thousands of those who shall be with Christ in his kingdom, have reason to look from the heights of their

glory, and say, *There was I born;* there I first saw the true light; there I learned the preciousness of Christ to my soul. Here, under the rod of the word and the power of God, may a fountain ever flow, fed from out of the riches of Christ, the streams of which shall make glad the hearts of the perishing in the most distant habitations of the wilderness! Amen.

SERMON III.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN ITS ESSENTIAL BEING.

1 CHRON. xxii. 1.

"Then David said, This is the house of the Lord our God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel."

IT was by no means a secondary matter under the dispensation of the levitical law, to know *what* was the house of the Lord, and *what* was the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel.

There was but one house, and one altar of burnt-offering. No sacrifice was accepted that was not brought to the door of the one, and sanctified by being offered upon the other. All that was peculiar to that dispensation was centered in that house and altar. All that pertained to an Israelite, as an Israelite, depended on his connection therewith. Hence the question between the Jews and Samaritans, as laid for decision before our Lord by the woman of Samaria, namely, whether men ought to worship at Jerusalem, or on Mount Gerizim, whether the true house and altar were in the one mount or the other, was a vital question to all who desired a share in the peculiar privileges of the ceremonial law. And hence the decision of that question had not been left to human appointments or conjectures. In every period of the history of the levitical dispensation, God had visibly declared by signs and wonders where his house and what his altar was.

When the tabernacle was set up and the altar therein, and all was consecrated according to divine appointment, then "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."* It was the marvellous signal whereby the God of Israel proclaimed in language too plain to be misunderstoood, "This is the house of the Lord our God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel."

And when, in place of the tabernacle of the wilderness, the more permanent and magnificent temple of Jerusalem was built, the same signal appeared. "The fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And when all the children of Israel saw"—they signified that they well understood; "they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground, upon the pavement, and worshiped, and praised the Lord."†

The dispensation of the law had a typical relation at all points to that of the Gospel. Its priesthood was typical, not indeed of our human ministry, which is no priesthood; but of that priesthood of our blessed Lord in heaven, which alone makes our ministry of any use, or the sinner's hope the least consolation. Its temple was a grand type of the Church of God, his household of faith, in earth and heaven. And the question, what is that Church or household, is just as vital to all our participation in the blessings of the Gospel, as was the question, what was the temple, and what the altar of the burnt-offering of Israel, to all participation in the privileges of the chosen people.

*Ex. xl. 34. †2 Chron. vii. 1 and 3.

To belong to the house or family of God is certainly essential to all hope of salvation. If we have no part in the temple, we can have none in the atoning sacrifice. If we be not of the family, we can have no share in its communion and festival. If we are not of Israel, we can have no inheritance in Israel. It is just as true, and to this we would draw your special attention, that if *we do belong to the house, the Church, the family of God, we must have part in the heritage of his people.*

To be found in the Church, and to be saved, are essentially connected. Whatever the Church may be, and whatever may make us members thereof, it is Christ's living body; and the scriptures always represent those who belong to that body as being in Christ Jesus, precisely where St. Paul was so earnest that he might be found at the last; and nothing can be more impossible than that a real member of Christ, a sinner found, at death, actually in him, can be lost. We repeat it, then, with special emphasis; membership in the Church of Christ, and salvation in Christ, are essentially connected, and correlative.

And, further: Whatever be the instrument of God, whereby alone we are made members of Christ's Church, it is essential to salvation, and is necessarily saving—simply because it unites us to Christ himself. Therefore, if any sacramental ordinance—if the sacrament of baptism—make us any thing more than *visibly* or *professedly* members of the Church; if it be the instrument whereby we are made, not merely in the visible sign, but in the inward reality, members of the body of Christ; if every one who has received that sacrament is a member of Christ's

body, the Church, then is he found in Christ—and then it is true, not only that without that sacrament we cannot be saved, but *with it, we cannot be lost.* Wherever you find the baptized, you find, according to such views, not only the true and only house and Church of the Lord our God, but those who have a saving portion in the one great burnt-offering for Israel.

Baptism and salvation are as indissolubly connected, according to that view, as our being in Christ, and our being in the peace of God. The saved are exclusively the baptized. The baptized are certainly the saved. These are consequences of that doctrine of baptism, which cannot be escaped. They follow of necessity from the vital union between the Church and Christ; from the oneness of membership in it and in him. Hence the primary importance of the question, *what is the house of the Lord our God?* what constitutes the Church of Christ? what makes us members thereof? Are the sacraments and the ministry so essential to the *being* of the Church, that without them it is a nonentity? Is the sacrament of baptism so identical with membership in the Church, not visible merely, but spiritual membership in the body of Christ, that whoever is baptized is such member, and whoever is not baptized cannot be? If not, what are the relations of the visible and divinely appointed ordinances of the Church to the being and membership thereof? These are questions which we hope, without the need of any great length of discussion, satisfactorily to answer. And subjects more important in these days, I know not where to find.

We must enter upon their consideration with the two certainties of which we have spoken plainly in sight, namely, whatever we make the Church, to be members is to be saved, not to be members is to be lost; because it is simply to be, or not to be, in Christ. And, moreover, whatever we make the one instrument whereby alone we become members of Christ's Church, and so of Christ himself, be it the living faith in the heart, or the sacrament of baptism on the brow, that instrument is not only absolutely necessary, in every case, to salvation, but wherever applied must be saving, simply because in virtue thereof we are in Christ Jesus. And, really, when we have set before you these infinitely momentous consequences of whatever view we take, we seem to have gone much of the way in answering the questions before us. For how hard it is, in view of all that have assuredly died in faith without having received the outward sign of baptism, as many of the martyrs died, and then of all who have died, without faith, having that sign, as millions on millions of the most ungodly have died, how hard to believe that all the latter died in the Church and so in Christ, and that none of the former could thus die! Not even the Romish apostacy, far as it has dared to avow the monstrous consequences which flow from its corruptions of Christian doctrine, has ventured entirely to maintain the extreme results of assigning to a sacrament so easily received, so indiscriminately possessed, a necessity so absolute, and an efficacy so saving. What is the invention of a baptism "*in blood*" and "*in will*" (*in sanguine* and *in voto*, as Rome's standard writers speak,) but the confession of salvation *without a sacrament*, and thus a virtual

denial of her doctrine of sacramental union to Christ the only union? Nevertheless, she is bound to the honest avowal, that as, by her own declaration, every baptized man, except he be an infidel, or a heretic, or a schismatic, is in Christ Jesus, by a living union, every such man must have part in the salvation of Christ. His sacramental baptism saves him—for as long as that sign is on him, he is in the Church and in Christ—and to call in other sacraments, to bring in the fires of purgatory, in order to make his baptism finally saving, is to flinch from the direct consequences of her doctrine, and virtually deny it.

We come now to one of the two main questions which we propose to answer in this discourse, namely:

I. In what consists the essential *being* of the Church of Christ; and, consequently, what is *membership* in the same? We shall find it a shorter and easier question than some of you may apprehend.

But let us mark well, that the question is not, what is the Church in its apostolic appointments, but in its essential existence; not the polity, but the being; not what makes the Church a visible organization before the world, but what makes it the mystical body of Christ before God.

The difference between the Church in its essential being before God, and in its divinely appointed mode of manifestation or visible profession before men, is precisely the same as the difference between the inward reality of communion with God, and the visible profession of that communion in the sacraments. All who come to the Lord's Supper we call *communicants;* we do not mean that all are *really* communicants in the salvation of Christ. But we name them what they profess to be. And in the same

way, we call the whole body of those who come to that sacrament, *the Church*—the body of Christ. But it does not follow that we suppose them all to be really, spiritually, of the Church or body of Christ. We name them what they profess to be. Professing to be communicants, we call them communicants. Professing to be Christians, we call them Christians. In baptism, professing to be regenerate, they are spoken of as regenerate in baptism. Professing, in the several ordinances of the Church, to be the Church, they are called the Church; although we do not forget the declaration of St. Paul: "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter."* If this was the state of the case under the ceremonial dispensation, how much more, if possible, must it be under the more spiritual and inward? How emphatically should we keep in mind, that he is not a *Christian* which is one outwardly, neither is that *baptism* which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian who is one inwardly, and the true, saving, baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit and not in the letter; and hence the Christian Church is not constituted of those who are Christians in the sacrament only, which is outward in the flesh, but of those whose baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit.

We find in the narrative connected with the text a very convenient and striking illustration. A pestilence was raging among the people of Israel in the reign of David. He beheld the angel of the Lord stand between

* Rom. ii. 28, 29.

the earth and heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand, stretched out over Jerusalem. The angel "stood by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite." David prayed that his hand might be stayed. The Lord commanded him to set up an altar on that floor. He did so, "and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings and called upon the Lord. And He answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering."* "When David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing floor of Ornan, then (it is written) he sacrificed there;"† that is, he continued to sacrifice there, notwithstanding (as the next verse says) "the tabernacle of the Lord and the altar of the burnt-offering were at that season at Gibeon." Then David said, "*this is the house of the Lord our God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel.*" The same miraculous indication from heaven that had been given at the consecration of the tabernacle, that the house of the Lord was there, was now manifested unto David, that the house of the Lord was that open threshing floor. The Lord answered from heaven by fire upon the altar.

The case of Jacob at Bethel is precisely similar. In the open field he sleeps. The vault of heaven alone is over him. God appears to him. He awakes and says, "Surely the Lord is in this place—this is none other but the house of God—and he named the place Bethel"—*house of God.*‡ Now, what made that open field or that naked threshing floor the house of the Lord? Jacob's words afford precisely the answer, "*The Lord is in this place.*" The special presence of the Lord! It is *resi-*

*1 Chron. xxi. 14–26. †ver. 28. ‡Gen. xxviii. 11–19.

dence in a place, not walls, that makes it our house. It is the *citizens*, not their edifices, that make the city.

Now, with this plain light from the Old Testament, as to what of old constituted the Lord's house, we open the New Testament to see what makes his house or Church in these days. I find the house of God declared to be in every true servant of God; and that which gives him that character, the indwelling of God's Spirit. "Know ye not that your body is *the temple* of the Holy Ghost, *which is in you.*"* I find next the whole community of God's people called his temple. "Ye are the temple of the living God (said St. Paul to the Corinthians) as God hath said, *I will dwell in them and walk in them.*"† The indwelling of God made them his temple. And thus the same Apostle says to the Ephesians, "Ye are builded together, for an habitation of God, *through the Spirit.*"‡ The Spirit abiding in them made them the habitation of God. Here we have precisely the similar case to that of the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. The presence of God to David in that unwalled space, made God's house to be there. The indwelling of God by his Spirit in any human being makes him his temple. The same indwelling of the Spirit in the whole community of God's people, makes it all his temple—his Church. The parts are not made each a temple by being first united to the whole. But the whole communion becomes the whole temple or Church, by the aggregation of the several parts, each being a temple in itself. God dwells in the community, and so makes it his house, by dwelling in each member thereof, and so making him "the habitation of God, through the Spirit."

*1 Cor. vi. 19. †2 Cor. vi. 16. ‡Ephes. ii. 22.

Thus we have found, by a very short process, the essential being of the Church—all that gives it a *spiritual*, and thus all that gives it a *real*, existence towards God. Nothing can be more simple. We ask, where is the house of the Lord our God? The scriptures answer, wherever is "the habitation of God through the Spirit,"—wherever his Spirit dwells. And thus the saying of Tertullian, so much wondered at because not understood, is perfectly scriptural: "Wherever three are met together in the name of the Lord, there is the Church"*—not a Church in any outward equipment or visible organization; but the Church, the habitation of God, in the highest sense of spiritual being. And why? Simply because of the Lord's assurance: "*There am I in the midst of them.*" I dwell in them—they are thus my temple, my Church. And to the same effect writes St. Paul: "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."† In other words, the bond which makes us all one body in Christ—one Church, is not an outward tie, but participation in the same inward life; not a visible sacrament of baptism, but that baptism which the sacrament signifies; *the being baptized by the Spirit, the drinking into one Spirit*, as the living branches drink into the life of the vine, and so are one body therewith.

Thus we have ascertained wherein consists the being of the Church, and yet have only incidentally mentioned such things as the sacraments, the ministry, or any out-

* Tertullian, lib. de exhort. Castitat. cap. vii. Ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet laici. Unusquisque enim sua fide vivit, nec est personarum acceptio apud Deum. Quoniam non auditores legis justificantur, sed factores.

† 1 Cor. xii. 13.

ward order. We have found that whatever the necessity of these, by divine appointment, to the *well*-being of the Church, they are not necessary as elements of its *being;* however necessary as means of establishing, extending, and continuing the Church, they are not parts of its essential structure.

The moment we get this view of the Church, as quite another thing in its essential constitution from the ordinances which God has connected therewith, the way is plain to the decision of the connected and important inquiry, *what is the divinely appointed instrument whereby we become members of the Church?* We have seen that whatever makes any man "the habitation of God, through the Spirit," makes him also a member of God's Church; since the latter is simply the community of all those in whom, individually, God's Spirit dwells. In other words, the Church in its real, interior being, is the aggregate of *all branches of the True Vine;* all real branches; all that are united to the Vine by an internal, vital bond, in partaking of its life; not of such branches, *in connection* with those which, however professedly and reputedly branches, are only so in appearance, by an outward insertion and the tie of a visible bond; (that is the visible Church as seen of men;) but of such branches only as commune in the Vine's own life, and by that oneness of spiritual life are united not only to the Vine, but among themselves also; all abiding in Christ by the fellowship of his Spirit, and he thus abiding in each of them. *That* is *the* Church of Christ. Union to *that* Church and union to Christ are, therefore, identical. Now, what is the order? Is it first, union to the Church in order to union to Christ; or union

to the Vine first, in order to membership with the branches? St. Peter decides, and well it were if those who claim to have such special succession from him, would better receive his words, "*To whom coming, as unto a living stone—ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house,*" a holy Church—the habitation of God through the Spirit.* Now, observe that this spiritual house is made of none but *living* stones—each is a real living Christian. The Church of God contains none else in *his* sight. Observe, also, that the stones do not become living *in consequence of being built up into the Church,* as if the life were thence communicated; but they are built up into the Church as a consequence of being already living, they together making the living Church, and not the Church making them. Observe, again, that it is by the coming of each separate stone to Christ as the living head of the corner, and being joined unto him, that gives it life, and it is that coming and union that joins each stone to every other by oneness of life in Christ, and thus builds up the spiritual house. The whole building is "fitly framed together in Christ." Thus the order: We come to Christ that we may come to his Church; not first the Church that we may, through union therewith, become members of Christ. If we were speaking of the *visible* Church, and of *visible* or *professed* union to Christ, we should say: Come to the Church, because only by its visible forms and signs can you be *professedly* in Christ. But it is of the Church in its spiritual being, without reference to its visible institutions, that we are now speaking, and hence the order—coming to Christ—thus made alive unto God—and so built up in his spiritual house.

* 2 Pet. ii. 4–5.

But how do we come to Christ? Peter gives his testimony again: "Wherefore, also, it is contained in scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, and he that *believeth* on him shall not be confounded."* Thus he that *believeth* on, is he that *cometh* to, that living corner stone. It is faith that saves us from being confounded, because it is faith that makes us partakers of Christ. Thus we have another step in the order. A living faith brings us to Christ. By partaking of his Spirit we are united unto him in oneness of inward life, and all who have that same union to Christ are thereby united to one another, in one spiritual communion and fellowship, which is the Church of Christ. Thus a living faith is God's ordained means whereby we are made members of his spiritual house, his living Church, unto which are the promises and by which he is glorified.

Now, my brethren, let me remind you of the position from which we set out, namely: that whatever the Church may be, to be found therein is to be saved, not to be found therein is to be lost; because it is to be found or not found in Christ. And, again, that whatever be the instrument whereby we are made members of the Church, outward ordinance, or inward faith, it is not only absolutely necessary to salvation, but must be absolutely saving, and all who are thus in the Church must have peace with God. Taking the view we have given of what constitutes the Church, and what instrumentally unites us thereto, these positions are not only true, but exactly consistent with all else in the scriptures, and in religion. They are but another mode of saying, "He

* 1 Pet. ii: 6.

that believeth in Jesus shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." Taking any other view of the being of the Church, and of what instrumentally makes us members thereof; say that the Church is made up of all who are joined together in a visible fellowship by the bonds of visible ordinances; that every baptized person is a member, and no unbaptized person can be; then consider who the baptized every where are—that most lamentable mixture of tares and wheat, that awful conjunction and confusion of godly and ungodly; and can you say that all, because in the Church, have peace with God? But why not, if they are in the true Church—in the body of Christ? If not, are your views of the being of the Church and what makes a member, consonant with the scriptures? Can they be in Christ and not in God's peace?

II. We proceed to the other question proposed. If the sacraments and other visible ordinances of the Church are not essential to its being, *in what relation do they stand thereto?* Mark well the question, lest we be misunderstood. It is not, what are the several *objects, uses, benefits,* towards the Church, or the Christian, for which the sacraments, &c., were ordained—but the much narrower question, what is the relation they stand in toward the essential being of the Church, and consequently of the Christian?

We look back to the narrative of David on the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. In one verse we have him saying of that open floor, simply because God's presence was there: "*This is the house of the Lord our God;*" —and in the next verse we read that he "set masons to

hew stones to build (in that place) the house of God"—and afterwards we find the magnificent temple of Solomon erected on that very spot, and customarily spoken of in the subsequent scriptures, as *the house of God.* How is this? Two houses in the same place—the invisible and visible? or the same house under different relations—first in its *invisible being,* made a temple by God's presence, next in its *visible form,* made a visible temple by walls and courts and altars?

The plain truth is, that when the stately sanctuary of Solomon was erected over and around the place which David long before had pronounced to be the temple of God, since the presence of God was no more there than it was before, it was no more really God's temple. Take away the walls and courts, and leave the divine presence, and the temple is there still. Of what use then were the walls and courts and altars, and all the imposing ceremonial connected therewith? We answer, they gave visibility to that otherwise invisible house of the Lord. They were its conspicuous notes and marks. They did not give it being, but they gave it visible, sensible, being. God needed them not in order to recognize his temple; but man did. Thus there was a sense in which the outward and visible building was the house of the Lord, while the real house was there without it. It was the form of that spiritual house, and called therefore the house. So we call our liturgy prayer, when it is only a form of prayer. Words, however, are signs and expressions of prayer, and we call them prayer, with no risk of being understood to mean that prayer is so identical therewith that it must be where they are, or cannot be where they are not.

Let us now apply what has been said of the temple of Jerusalem to illustrate the relation of the sacraments and other ordinances of the Church, to the Church itself. During the interval between the death of Christ and the setting up of the visible Church by the administration of baptism to the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, there was certainly a Church. Since the beginning of the world, God had always his house, his habitation through the Spirit, in this world. One hundred and twenty disciples, believers in Jesus, commanded by him to continue in Jerusalem till they should receive the promise of the Father, were gathered together in Jerusalem, in his name, and he, according to his promise, was *in the midst of them.* They were thus his temple. And presently the Lord visibly declared they were his temple, precisely as he declared the same of the threshing-floor of Ornan, or the tabernacle of Moses. "There came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."

But as yet, the Church of Christ had no administration of sacraments. It was like the house of the Lord in the threshing-floor of Ornan, when it had no walls. The baptism ministered before the death of Christ was not the *sacramental* baptism of the Christian Church. The Lord's Supper had been administered to only eleven out of the hundred and twenty, and then while the Jewish dispensation still existed. The sacraments were in being only as appointments for a time to come. They had no

hand in constituting the Church that then was. But that Church nevertheless was just as really the Church of God, as it has been ever since. Composed of living stones, built upon the precious corner stone which God had laid, and inhabited by "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," it was in every essential respect "the temple of the living God."

But the Church, then made visible as such, only by miraculous signs, in order that it might come into contact with the world in which its work is to be done, must have a visible and permanent form or body. It is not enough that God knoweth them that are his. Man must see who profess to be his. An angel host may dwell among us in all the perfectness of their being, but until they put on some visible shape we cannot know their presence. Man comes in contact with man, only through the means of a visible form—the body he lives in. The Church, as a spiritual house, can be known to the world only through a similar form. So, then, when the Apostles proceeded to place the Church in its appointed relations to the world, they invested it with a body of visible ordinances, which the Lord had appointed, and such as, by their fewness and simplicity, were suited to a dispensation intended to embrace all nations. No sooner had David ascertained the house of the Lord, than he set men to hew stones to build its walls. No sooner had the Lord declared, by the manifestation of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, that in those hundred and twenty disciples was his Church, than the Apostles began to preach the word and baptize. Thousands were the same day turned to the Lord, and, by faith, were joined to Christ, and so to

his Church. What was thus invisibly done, they were required openly to confess. They were *baptized* in the sacramental sign, as they had been already in the spiritual reality. Thus they became, not more really members of Christ, but more visibly; as a king, by his coronation, is no more a king, but only more formally and declaratively.

But as baptism is only once in a Christian's life, a sacrament more permanently in sight was needed for the full visibility of the Church. The Lord had prepared and directed it. The Apostles added therefore to the baptized, the sacrament of communion in the body and blood of Christ. Thus the Church, with both the sacramental marks and signs which the Lord had ordained, and with a divinely appointed ministry preaching the pure word of God, was fully set up in its visible form, as before in its invisible being. "They that gladly received the word were baptized, and they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers."

Now, in all this account of the difference between the Church *as it is*, and the Church as it is *visible*, in ordinances, we have had in view the language of our standards. When the object is to declare simply what the Church of Christ is, without reference to how it is known, the description is, "the *blessed company of all faithful people;*"* in other words, all believers in Jesus. But when the object is not only the spiritual *being* of the Church before God, but its visible form before men; what *indicates* as well as what *constitutes* it; then the Homily for

*Communion office.

Whit-Sunday says: "The true Church is an universal congregation or fellowship of God's faithful and elect people, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." So much for what it *is* in its essential constitution. Then the Homily proceeds: "And it hath always these *notes* or *marks* whereby it is known: Pure and sound doctrine, the sacraments ministered according to Christ's holy institution, and the right use of ecclesiastical discipline."* So much for what makes it visible.

Thus our standards place the sacraments and ministry in relation to the inward being of the Church, exactly where they put them as to the spiritual being of the individual Christian. A man is not qualified for the *sacra-*

*The declaration of Bishop Ridley in the Conferences between him and Latimer during their imprisonment, are remarkably illustrative of the above passage from the Homilies. Ridley supposes the Romish adversary whom he calls Antoninus, to say: "Without the Church, (saith St. Augustine,) be the life never so well spent, it shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven." To which Ridley answers by defining what the Church *is*—and how it is marked, and thus making no objection to the truth of the adversary's position, provided the Church spoken of were rightly understood. He says: "The holy Catholic or universal Church, which is the communion of the saints, the house of God, the city of God, the spouse of Christ, the body of Christ, the pillar and stay of truth; this Church, I believe, according to the Creed; this Church I do reverence and honor in the Lord—the marks whereby this Church are known to me in this dark world are these: The sincere preaching of God's word; the due administration of the sacraments; charity; and faithful observing of ecclesiastical discipline, according to the word of God. And that Church which is *garnished with these marks*, is in very deed that heavenly Jerusalem *which consisteth of those that be born from above*. Forth of this I grant there is no salvation." Soon after, Bishop Ridley more particularly describing the constituency of the Church, says: "That Church which is Christ's body, and of which he is the head, standeth only of living stones and true Christians, not only outwardly in name and title, but inwardly in heart and in truth." Ridley's Works, Parkers' Society Edition, pages 123 and 126.

Nothing can be plainer than the above distinction of Ridley's between the Church, as *consisting* of all, and only of those who are true Christians in heart and truth, and as made *known* or *visible* by the sacraments, &c.

ment of baptism until he has been baptized; that is, until he has received that inward grace, that baptism of the Spirit, which the sacrament signifies. He must repent and believe—he must first be a Christian, and then receive the marks and notes of a Christian. But still he is said by the Church to be made *in baptism* "a member of Christ, and a child of God;" because while his previous religious life was seen of God, the Church can know him only from the period of his *professing* a religious life, and in her register dates his being made a child of God from the day when she began to know him as such. His becoming a child of God was really when he repented and believed in Jesus. His becoming such in the sight of the Church was when he *professed* repentance and faith in the sacrament of baptism. So we say a man receives the conveyance of an estate when he receives the signed and sealed title-deed, though he was really the owner from the time he paid for it. The human tribunal cannot take knowledge of the private transaction; but requires the visible instrument, and makes its date the beginning of ownership. Such is the case as necessarily in the Church as in the state. A man is made a member of Christ in baptism, who was a member before by a living faith, because then he receives the visible instrument by which only the Church can know him. A community of Christ's people begins to be his Church before the eyes of men, when it becomes clothed with those outward ordinances which make it visible as such to men.

Our Church, when speaking with reference to our standing and privileges in the visible Church, dates the time when we were made children of God at our *sacra-*

mental baptism; because then we were made professedly such. But when she speaks of our standing before God, who looketh on the heart and needs no sacramental signs to mark us, then, as everywhere in her Homilies, she leaves the sacramental sign out of sight and speaks only of what it signifies, the baptism of the Holy Ghost, the new birth unto righteousness; and dates the beginning of Christian life and hope from thence. This is the key which not only fits the wards of our Church standards, but unlocks what, in some of our oldest and best divines, Bishop Beveridge, for example, seems contradictory; so that to some they seem to teach the very doctrine of baptismal regeneration and justification which they expressly deny.

And, now, in the concluding part of this discourse, lest in what we have said concerning the relation of the outward order to the inward being of the Church, we should seem in any degree to favor that neglect of ordinances to which some minds in avoiding the opposite extreme of undue reliance on them are so apt to run, we must take you once more to the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, and the temple built thereon.

That magnificent temple, with all its various ceremonial appurtenances, was, as we have seen, not the house of the Lord, but only the visible form of that house, and for that reason only was called the temple. But it must be noted emphatically that as a form, it was *all divinely appointed.* As the tabernacle was made by Moses according to the pattern which God had showed him in the Mount; so the temple was built by Solomon, after a pattern which David his father had received of the Lord, and of which David said to him: "All this the Lord

made me understand, in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern."* The altars and courts and walls of that structure did not make it the house of the Lord, but they were as much of divine command as if they did. The *form* was not the *being*, but God appointed that form for that being, and no man could put them asunder without profaneness. If the one was very subordinate to the other, both were sacred; both to be reverenced as nothing of man's ordaining should ever be.

We turn again to the visible ordinances of the house of God, under the gospel. They are very few and simple, as suits the more spiritual aspect, and the more active work of a Church which must be as much at home in the wilderness as in the city, on the march of missionary invasion as in the oldest and most fixed dwelling place of Christianity. The Jewish ritual was for a single nation and a narrow territory. The work of that dispensation was in no sense aggressive. It was to preserve, not to spread the knowledge of God—a light to be kept within the veil of the sanctuary, not to be carried abroad into surrounding paganism. It was a sentinel on the walls; a witness to testify; a prophet to be ever pointing towards the more perfect dispensation. Thus stationary, it could bear the weight of cumbrous ordinances. But the Christian dispensation is for the length and breadth of the earth. Its business is conquest; breaking down the kingdom of Satan; making captive all nations to Christ; never to be stationary till that work is done. On such an errand, the Church, like the first Apostles, must carry little weight, nothing but staff and scrip. The water,

* 1 Chron. xxviii: 11, 12, 19.

the bread, and the word; Baptism, the Supper of the Lord, and the trump of the Gospel, are all her equipments. These are notes and marks which God has made as essential to her divinely appointed visible form, as the dwelling of his Spirit in the hearts of his people is essential to her invisible being. There is nothing more foolish than to suppose that because the exterior of the Church is not the Church, because the ordinances of religion are not religion, they may be treated with little religious regard. Do those who are prone to such thoughts, imagine the same with regard to another form; that which makes their own being a visible being—namely, their own bodies? God has joined the soul and body of man together in this life, by a bond which only death is permitted to break. No man supposes that his body is his life; he knows that the soul is essentially the man; but he knows that the soul is an inhabitant of this world, only as long as the body is its habitation; that it can give no sign of life nor hold any communication with this world, but by that bodily form. The ordinances of the senses and of speech and motion are its *visible being*, though not its being. Their actings and re-actings, one upon another, are continual and necessary. The well-being of each requires the constant keeping of the other in health and vigor. It is the madman that says, the body is not the spirit, and therefore I will not regard it. "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

In the same way, has God joined together in this life, the spiritual being of his Church and a certain body of divinely instituted ordinances, without which the former is permitted to have no fixed habitation in this world,

nor any means of manifesting itself as a Church of God, before the world. And while it is a most important truth that these are not religion, but only its forms, we must maintain that precisely in proportion as they are neglected by any branch of the visible Church, must the life of true piety therein be damaged. True, we can easily suppose a servant of God with the word in his mind, and the Spirit of Christ in his heart, separated by divine Providence from all public and social means of grace, and yet living unto God in the highest spiritual health, the Lord working in him independently of those means of grace from which his own dispensation has separated him. But let him be returned to the bosom of Christian fellowship, and then if he wilfully come not to the public sacrifice of prayer and praise, and neglect the ministry of the word, and the sacrament of communion in the atonement of Christ, he must decline in grace. His confession of Christ before men is effaced. However he may hope that in his private life he can shed the influence of a Christian example on those around him, that life is but an evil example of the manifest inconsistency of professing to be a follower of Christ, and yet wilfully dishonoring institutions of Christ, divinely appointed means of grace, as binding in their place as any obligations of the scripture.

Still stronger appears the case when we speak of the Church instead of the individual Christian. There is such a thing as destroying the spirit of religion in the visible Church, by overloading the simple institutions of Christ with rites and ordinances of human invention. But there is another extreme not less fatal. Two ways there are of

dishonoring the Gospel and doing damage to our own souls, as regards the divinely instituted ordinances of the Church. We may *undervalue* and *overvalue* them. By a diminutive estimate of their use, you deny them the place which God has given them. By an exaggerated estimate, you appoint them a place which God has denied them. In a misguided zeal for the inward life of all religion, you may do great injustice to its ordained means of growth. Out of an inordinate concentration of interest upon the sacramental signs and means, you may grievously dishonor the nature and hinder the growth of inward piety. Make the sacraments, in effect, identical with the communication of grace, and we cannot *undervalue* them, in that respect, for thus they are not what God made them. Make them only signs and effectual means of grace, depending on the faith and prayer of those who come to them, and we cannot *overvalue* them, except we give them a higher place than the ministry of the *word of God.*

We must carefully guard against both the extremes which I have adverted to. Which is the worst I have no wish to decide. But I see not why the one error should be supposed the result of a specially reverential spirit, and the other of an irreverent. If I find a man who, out of a pious fear of leading sinners away from Christ and from the spiritual power of godliness, to a resting in its more lifeless form, unduly and injuriously depreciates the sacraments in comparison with the preaching of the gospel, I see not that I may not attribute his error to an humble reverence for his Master, at least as much as that of the man who out of an earnest zeal for the visible Church, so exalts the sacraments as to change

their whole character from signs of grace to grace itself; so magnifies the ministry of the Church, under the name of a sacrificing priesthood, as not only to deprive the preaching of the word of its rightful honor and value, but to put our Lord's ever-living priesthood almost out of sight, and make the coming of a sinner to sacraments ministered by a priesthood of men, to be all that is meant by his coming to Christ. I see no godly reverence in this. Sacraments which point me and help me to Christ, I understand and reverence and love as God's own means of grace. Sacraments which say *they* are Christ to me, and which profess to give me grace for which the scriptures bid me look unto Jesus; sacraments and ministries which thus stand in the way of my feeling the need and preciousness of a direct and constant communication between my soul and the present intercession of Jesus at the right hand of God, independently of all ordinances and all human intervention, are sacraments and ministries most sadly perverted, and over which a godly reverence has only to mourn such dishonoring of the Gospel and of Christ.

There is the form of godliness, and there is the power; both of God. Each has its peculiar importance. The great evil is in confounding them; putting one for the other; being satisfied with either without the other. Just as the inspired word, the appointed instrument of sanctification, is dependent for its efficacy on the faith that receives it, so are the sacraments. The form of grace is in the latter; the form of truth is in the former; in themselves only forms; to the unbelieving equally inefficacious; to the believing alike means of grace from

God whereby he carries on his good work in the hearts of his people.

Great care must we take, lest in giving these divinely ordained and precious means their right place of most reverent estimation, our minds rest too much upon them, instead of passing intelligently through them to the clearer seeing of Christ and the more vigorous apprehending, by faith, of all his promised grace; lest we make them *objects* instead of *mediums;* like a man using his spectacles as things to look *at*, instead of things to look *with*. Great care must we take lest we narrow the communion of our souls with Christ to the single avenue of outward and ministerial means of grace, and thus deprive our souls of the blessedness of that habitual walk of faith, wherein it is the believer's privilege to be always going directly and most freely to his Saviour, as well in his daily exercises of heart as in the solemnities of the sanctuary; great care lest out of a disproportioned reverence for sacramental institutions we place in any secondary rank among means of grace, that great instrument of God in awakening a dead world, and sanctifying a believing heart, the inspired word, preached by Christ's ambassadors; read, and pondered, and prayed over by the sinner.

And now, in conclusion, let us remember, brethren, that the House of the Lord, the household of faith, for which we have been inquiring, and of which I have showed you the essential being, is the Church, not of this Christian dispensation only, but of all dispensations, since there was a Church of God on earth; the Father's house of many mansions, in which the saints of all ages, all forms, all diversities of light and privilege, are joined together at this

time, whether they be saints in the imperfectness of the Church below, or in the perfectness of the holiness above; the House of God, in which Enoch walked with him, and Abraham lived by faith, and David praised, and Paul labored; the Church, whose life has always been "hid with Christ in God"—"the communion of saints—the Holy Catholic Church" wherein is the "*one Lord*," the hope and life, the one *living faith* of the heart, whereby that life and hope are embraced, and the one baptism of the Spirit, sanctifying the heart and making it meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Other "Holy Catholic Church" I know not where to find. A member of that Catholic Church I rejoice to greet in any man, of whatever name, in whom are those spiritual marks. If I know him not for a brother, God knows him for a son. If he be separated from visible Church communion, he is not, and can not be separated from communion here and forever with all the true Church of Christ, simply because he is not separated from Christ.

To gather sinners into that blessed communion; to build them in that faith and promote in them more and more that baptism, is the single work of our ministry. Nothing is of any value in the Church but as it bears on that. To be in that communion is life—out of it is death. To bring a soul to that Church, is to save it and make proof of our ministry. There, brethren, may we be found when called of God to die—counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord—that we may "win Christ and be found in him." Amen.

NOTE.—The above discourse was preached in the Church of the Epiphany, Philadelphia, A. D. 1848, as the first annual sermon of the Prot. Ep. Society for the Promotion of Evangelical Knowledge. It has been much altered for this volume, and it is hoped improved, but its sentiments in no sense changed.

SERMON IV.

THE PERSONAL MINISTRY OF CHRIST IN HIS CHURCH, NOW AND EVER.

LUKE iii. 16, 17.

"I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."*

THE advent of our Lord had taken place some thirty years before these words were spoken concerning him by his distinguished herald, John the Baptist. He had come in the flesh, but not in his ministry. But now he was about to appear in the work which the Father had given him to do. Meanwhile, the Jewish people, by the study of the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, had been generally impressed with the belief that the time was at hand; so that in consequence of the peculiar character and ministry of John, "all men mused in their hearts whether he were the Christ or no." Thus was that faithful messenger led to declare, in the words of the text, how infinitely superior to himself was He whose coming they looked for, and whose way he was sent to prepare.

Before proceeding to the chief subjects of discourse as contained in the text, we cannot but draw your attention

* Preached for the Church Missionary Society, in St. Saviour's, Chelsea, London, May 8, 1853.

to the exceeding strength of the testimony of John to the personal dignity and eminence of our Lord. "*One mightier than I cometh, whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose.*" To take off, or carry, the shoes of another, was in those days so menial an office that only the lowest of servants were put to it. But even *that*, John confessed he was not worthy to perform to our Lord. And yet, Who was John? Do you say, *a prophet?* "Yea, (said the Lord) and much more than a prophet; and verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

Many centuries before his birth, prophets of God had been inspired to foretell his coming. An angel from the host of heaven was despatched to announce to his parents the near approach of that event. From his mother's womb, "he was filled with the Holy Ghost." Other prophets were distant foretellers of the coming of Christ. This prophet was his immediate forerunner—going directly before his face. Others testified that Christ *would* come; John testified that he *was* come; and to him was granted the privilege and honor of being the first to see and recognize and proclaim Jesus, in his proper character as the Saviour of the world. And yet that greatest of prophets, most exalted of men, sanctified from the birth, felt himself not worthy to unloose the latchet of the shoe of Christ. The question comes then, *Who and what is Christ?* Do you say, "a great prophet, mighty in word and deed"? Aye, but since John was more than a prophet, and yet so unspeakably his inferior, will you say he was a mere man; when a man, than whom there was not a greater among the sons of men, was not worthy

to serve him in the very humblest office? The words of Christ in the book of the prophet Malachi, shall answer, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare my way before me."* Who is this, thus speaking as if he were Lord of all? speaking of sending his messenger to prepare his way, some six hundred years before the time? Is it mere man; or is it the sovereign and eternal God? Let the prophet Isaiah answer further,—"The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of *the Lord*, make straight in the desert a highway *for our God*."† John the Baptist was that voice crying in the wilderness—Christ, he whose way he came to prepare;—and Christ was then our Lord and God. Contemplating him in that infinite dignity, we perfectly comprehend the unworthiness of John so much as to perform the lowest service at his feet. The seraphim veil their faces in his presence. And God forbid that we, sinners on earth, should render him any lower reverence. Be it the glory of every soul that hopes in him for acceptance with God, to place him on the throne of his heart, as his God, as well as Saviour, and to worship him as sitting on the throne of all dominion and power, the eternal Jehovah, "for whom and by whom are all things."

Let us proceed to the main points of the text. You will observe the strong comparison between the ministry of John and that of Christ. "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose; he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; whose fan is

* Malachi iii. 1. † Isaiah xl. 3.

in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." We mark in the first place:—

I. The essential difference between the ministry of Christ, and that of all his ministers on earth, in point of SPIRITUAL EFFICACY.

The difference is expressed in the text with reference merely to the comparative baptisms of John and of Christ. But it holds as well in regard to all parts of the work of the ministry. John baptized with water only. In other words, the outward sign of baptism was all that John could give. The inward and spiritual grace of baptism, which is the real baptism, was not at his disposal. He, who was mightier than John, and whose coming in the power of his ministry was then at hand,—HE would baptize "*with the Holy Ghost and with fire.*"

We understand the addition of the words "*with fire*" to the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as a figurative expression of the searching, refining, illuminating, warming influences of the Lord's Spirit upon the dark, and dead, and cold heart of unregenerate man. The whole declaration was intended to foretell the mighty power that would attend on the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ for the *sanctification of the hearts* of sinful men; how, as water cleanses, and as fire refines and kindles, so his Spirit would search out and consume away the corruptions of our sinful nature, enlightening believers with heavenly wisdom, shedding abroad in their hearts the love of God, till finally they are restored to his perfect image and likeness in a spotless holiness.

We have no idea that John, in using these words, had any direct reference to the Christian *sacrament* of baptism. It is written that our Lord "*baptized not*,"* that is, he did not baptize in the visible form of water. But yet in the highest, and fullest, and only *real* sense in which baptism can be given, he did baptize; because he poured out upon his disciples that Spirit of holiness, which is the only true baptism. In this sense, none but he ever did or could baptize. In this sense he has been ministering to his Church and baptizing, ever since the Gospel began its course; every soul of man that was ever transformed by the renewing of his mind, into the love and holiness of God, having been indebted for all to the direct work of Christ himself, as the ever-present minister of his grace, baptizing with the Holy Ghost. In this view there is really no ministry of baptism in the Church, except the unseen, but ever-living and all-powerful ministry of Christ, searching, changing, sanctifying the hearts of sinners. The declaration of John is as if he had said—he that cometh after me is mightier than I. He shall *sanctify* with the Holy Ghost, internally, really, effectually. I baptize with water. I can give but the form and sign of sanctification. He will make you holy in spirit and in truth, giving you the power and life of a new birth unto righteousness.

Thus you perceive that the baptism given by our Lord is identical with the commencement, and progress, and final completion of our sanctification by his Spirit. It is the abiding and progressive renewing of our minds after the mind of Christ. The baptism in the form of the sac-

*John iv. 2.

rament is once only—that by the power of the Spirit is progressive in the Christian life, and is co-extensive therewith; just as communion in the form of the sacrament is occasional only, while the spiritual communion with Christ continues as long as faith lives in the heart. The baptism of the Spirit begins in the spiritual regeneration of the sinner, whether that great inward change takes place at the time of the sacramental washing, or before, or after. It continues and becomes more perfect, as the Christian, under the cleansing of the Spirit, becomes more holy. Every increase of inward sanctification is the progress, step by step, of this baptism of the Holy Ghost. As the inward washing becomes more perfect, the real baptism becomes more complete. The Christian, improving his privileges, is always under that direct ministry of Christ, who thus sits "as a refiner and purifier of silver," and who will continue that work, till he shall have searched out and consumed away in the believer the last impurity of our nature; till our whole inner man shall become the *new* man, perfectly conformed to our Lord's own likeness, and meet for his kingdom.

But the words of John, comparing his baptism with that of his Lord, we all must alike use who are commissioned to officiate in the ministry of Christ on earth. To be able to baptize only with water, was not a peculiarity of the Baptist. No minister of the gospel can do any more. It is not given to us to communicate in baptism the spiritual, sanctifying grace. We officiate only in the sign of the Spirit, and except the receiver of the sign have the preparation of a living faith to seek the reality of him who only can give it, it will be to him but a sign. The

spiritual grace, or the new birth unto righteousness, is not tied to our hands; depends not on our agency; flows not through our act; dwells not in any store-house in the Church on earth; never reaches any heart but directly by the unseen, personal ministry of Jesus, reaching to each seeking soul as really now as when of old he healed the leper, or raised the dead. Thus we point every one that desires the renewing of the Holy Ghost far above our ministry; far above all visible ordinances in our gift, however divinely appointed and needful in their place, to him who is "able to save to the uttermost;" saying with John the Baptist, "*Behold the Lamb of God!*"

It does not militate against all this to say, that between our ministry and that of John, there is this great difference, that the baptism he gave was not, as ours is, a sacrament, and that the Holy Ghost had not then been given, as after the ascension of Christ he was given to the Church. For, you will note, that we are not teaching that greater power of the Spirit does not attend the right reception of Gospel ordinances in repentance and faith, than attended the baptism of John; but that whatever the grace received therein by the repenting and believing heart, it is not the ministry of man, nor the ordinance given by the human minister, that confers it. Sacraments are means of grace, made fruitful on certain conditions only; but they are not grace; they contain not grace; they give not grace. The efficacy of grace resides not in them, is not confined to them. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." It is "God that worketh in us to will and to do," as directly as when he made the world. It is the Spirit of God moving on

our hearts as personally and directly as when he moved on the face of the primitive chaos, that gives the newness of life. It is the Lord and Giver of life shining into our hearts, as truly and immediately as when in the beginning of the world, he said "Let there be light."

This declaration we confine not to baptism, or to sacramental ordinances. We extend it to every part of our ministry. It takes in the whole preaching of the word. What if it be a Paul that preaches, or an Apollos, or Cephas; no matter what the winning simplicity, or the moving eloquence with which the pure truth is declared and urged upon your hearts. As to all spiritual power, it goes not of itself beyond the outward sign, which is the spoken word. It remains in the memory or in the understanding of the hearer, as powerless of itself for spiritual life, as the mere water upon the brow of the baptized. A great gulf is fixed between the furthest point which *our* preaching can reach, and the conversion of a sinner to God. We may teach the understanding and convince it. We may move the sensibilities and disturb them in their depths. We may alarm the wicked with the solemn and searching exhibition of the truth, and, like a smitten Felix, he may tremble at the prospect of a judgment to come. But conviction of the intellect is not conversion; the gushing of tears, the quaking of conscience, is not conversion. The great work remains. Repentance, a new heart, is not ours to give, nor ours so much as to begin. Let us realize that whenever a sinner is turned unto God, with a new heart, and a genuine repentance, whatever the instrument employed, and however entirely out of our sight the process within, the work is as directly

and exclusively of the omnipotence of God as if he should create a world. Man never converted man to God.

John the Baptist was "*a voice* crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." He was only a voice. He spoke the truth and urged it; nothing more. If any repented, and so in his heart was prepared the way of the Lord, it was the Lord that prepared that way. That voice was the appointed instrument, like the trumpets around the walls of Jericho; but the power was His only who sent the voice. Nothing more than such instruments, are the ministers of the Gospel. There is a second coming of Christ for which it is our office to make ready the way, "by turning the hearts of the disobedient unto the wisdom of the just." For this purpose we cry aloud in this world's wilderness of sin, and emptiness, and misery. We sound the call to repentance; we publish the invitations of the Gospel; we lay siege to the conscience with the battery of truth; we try to gain over the hearts of men to God. We know it is the Lord's appointed means. Without it, his way will no more be prepared, than it can be by it. But we are only a voice. Left to ourselves, none mightier to look to and depend on, none to speak to the rebellious and disobedient, the wordly, and the proud, and the dead in sin "as never man spake,"—our ministry would be as fruitless as the voice on the wind that dies away.

But we are not left to ourselves. The whole work of the ministry is not committed to such earthen vessels. The treasure of Gospel truth is in such feeble hands as ours, that all may see that the excellency of the power is of God and not of us. We do the under-work. There is

a teacher and minister of whom it is written that he hath "the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to him that is weary," and concerning whom it was testified of old, that he spake "as one having authority, and not as the scribes." His word commanded the sea and it obeyed; he bade the dead arise, and they stood up; and he is now, and always, the great officiating minister of his Church—"having authority" over the consciences and hearts of men, and not suffering his word to return unto him void. We plant the seed and water it: He gives the life, and growth, and fruit. We call upon sinners to work out their salvation with fear and trembling: He works in them to will and to do according to his good pleasure; we the instruments merely,—Christ all the power and his all the glory.

This vast difference, between the visible minister in the sanctuary here, and the invisible minister in the sanctuary on high, the Church of Corinth, even in the days of St. Paul, had in a great degree forgotten; so prone is man to glory in man, and so early began in the Church that great sin, which afterwards grew to such enormity, and now reigns so widely and ruinously in a large part of nominal Christendom,—the virtual substitution of the ministering of man for that of the Lord of all; so that the people, instead of looking unto Jesus, look to the so-called priest, and put their trust in him, and in the sacraments of God's appointing, or of man's making, which he gives them. And Paul taught us how to rebuke that sin. Hear his indignant words: "Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, *even as the Lord gave to every man?* I have planted, Apollos watered, but God

gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase."*

Not only is this view of great importance to minister and people, to keep their dependence where it ought to be, but it is of great consolation to both.

What should we do to sustain our hearts in so great a work as that committed to us, having nothing stronger than the simple word as our means of producing in the hearts of men the obedience of Christ; feeling that "neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth," what should we do, were it not for the assurance that "*God giveth the increase*"?—that we are not alone in the work—that there is a minister to give the growth and fruit, as well as we feeble ones to plant the seed; that not only *must* HE give it, if it be given at all, but he *doth* give it; that all the conversions and all the growth of grace in any heart, since the Gospel was preached, are the abundant evidence that to the faithful planting and watering of his word, he will give increase. That seed may have its winter, when it will seem only to wither and die, and we may need "long patience" to wait for it, and the fruit may never come for us to see in this life; for what are we in the matter; but it will be given, and be gathered into the Lord's garner, to the praise of the riches of his grace.

And let all that hear the word of his grace take comfort likewise. The same words that forbid all trust in man, encourage all faith in Christ. When you realize how great is the work to be wrought in your hearts to make

* 1 Cor. iii. 5—7.

you superior to the world and meet for God's kingdom, where would be your hope, had you no ministry to look to for help, but that of men of like passions and infirmities with yourselves? But when you learn to look on all our work as only the *voice* of the word, directing you above and away from ourselves, and from all trust in the creature and in ordinances, to Christ, the great power of God, who is "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption;" when in the very weakness of the ministry that can only baptize with water, you learn to look, while you wait on that ministry, the more to him who doth and will baptize every seeking soul with the Holy Ghost, and who will continue that baptism until he hath perfectly cleansed you from all unrighteousness and set you at his own right hand; then will your hope abound and your hearts rejoice, and you will glory in the preciousness of Christ, your strength and your Redeemer.

But there is a part of our text to which I have not yet directed your attention.

John testified further concerning Christ, in these words —"*whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.*"

II. This leads us to speak, in the second place, of the essential difference between the work of Christ, as the minister of his Church, and all our ministry, in point of DISCIPLINARY POWER.

A part of our office is the exercise of government and discipline in the visible Church. Besides the work of reproving, and exhorting, and instructing, by the word, for

the increase in grace of all the members of the Church, it is part of our office to separate from its communion, as far as it can be safely done, by ministers who cannot search the heart,—all such as are unworthy to continue therein.

But when we say that such discipline is to be exercised by *ministers who cannot search the heart*, you see at once how contracted is the field of their work in this respect, and how limited the power of their office. Innumerable are the avenues and the disguises by which the self-deceived and the deceiver may elude the vigilance of such watchmen, and not only enter, but remain in, the communion of the visible Church, to its exceeding injury and dishonor. Hence it is that while the true, *the invisible Church*, as God's own "household of faith," unto which his promises are exclusively made, cannot have in it any but his true people; because a living union by faith to Christ is the very essence of membership in that Church, and because he who does search the heart, and cannot be deceived, keeps the door; the visible or professing Church, on the other hand, the Church as it is seen of men, under the boundaries and marks of outward ordinances, is represented in the scriptures, just as all must see it to be, exceedingly mixed—the genuine people of God united every where, under the same sacraments, with those who are only nominally his people. It is the true Vine with its many branches; some united to it by a junction of life; others only by the bonds of outward ordinance; some living and fruitful, others dead.* It is the great draw-net cast in to the sea, gathering of every kind, the good and

* John xv. 1, 2.

the bad, and keeping the mixed multitude within its meshes, until it is brought to shore, and they "gather the good into vessels, and cast the bad away."* It is the great harvest-field, in which the tares have grown up with the wheat, all surrounded by the same enclosure, all seeming to the distant eye to belong to the same sowing, but really of entirely distinct natures, and coming from entirely different seed, from seed sown by different hands, and for opposite ends. It is that field permitted to go on thus confused and defiled, because the servants of the husbandman cannot be trusted with the separation; "lest while they gather up the tares," unable to distinguish with accuracy, "they root up also the wheat with them."†

We do not mean that the visible Church is not a great deal more mixed and defiled with the unholy and the spiritually dead, than it would have been, had there been every where and always a more faithful ministry of the word and of such discipline as is committed to man. But we mean that under the best ministry of which human wisdom and faithfulness are capable, the state of the visible Church, under the power of Satan and our deceitful hearts, would have perfectly fulfilled those inspired representations of its mixed and lamentable aspect. It is the *Holy* Catholic Church, because its true members are holy—as the true wheat is good, no matter what it be mixed with; and because the unholy are not its members, however seeming to be, as the tares are not of the harvest, though enclosed within its landmarks.

But is there no remedy for this sad confusion? Because *our* ministry cannot make the separation, is there

* Matt. xiii. 47. † Matt. xiii.

none that will? Is the Lord's hand shortened that he cannot purify his Church? As Lord of the Temple, will he not drive out all that profane it, as of old he cleansed his Father's house in Jerusalem? As the Bridegroom who hath espoused the Church as his Bride, is there not a day coming when he will present it unto himself, a pure virgin, without spot and blameless? What man cannot do, because he hath power neither to discern between the true and the false, nor to separate them to their own places, he who hath all power in heaven and earth will do in the last day. He "will send forth his angels to gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and he will cast them into a furnace of fire; where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." "Then shall ye discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not." "Then shall the righteous,"—the Church universal, in its true being and character, as a living, holy, peculiar people, without spot and without mixture, "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father,"—as the sun when all the vapors that had concealed its light have been driven away by some rushing wind.

In that day, will all the present ministry of man be ended, as that of John the Baptist ceased when the Lord had come. "He must increase, but we must decrease. He that cometh from heaven is above all." Heralds' work is done when the King appears. "The Lord is in his holy Temple." We that were sent before him "to make ready his way," are wanted no more, as ministers of his word. We come down, therefore, from our pulpits, to give

account of our stewardship. We must take our places in the great congregation, with all the quick and the dead, when the trump of the archangel hath called to judgment, having no distinction from our office as ministers of the Gospel but the greater responsibility, and like all the rest of men, to be driven away as stubble, if not in Christ. "But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?" Then shall the whole multitude of the professed servants of God, all marked alike by outward enclosure of ordinances—the Church of sacramental signs, in which the Church of spiritual grace appears as the wheat of the harvest, while yet mixed with the chaff on the threshing floor,—then shall they be separated one from another. The time of the winnowing comes. The Lord is now ready and furnished for that work. His "fan *is in his hand.*" All is ready, waiting only the fullness of time. The delay will not be long. "*He will thoroughly purge his floor.*" How awful that discrimination, as one shall be taken of the baptized and another left—one taken of two that alike called themselves Christians, and were of the same visible communion, and the other left. How differently the line of separation will be made from any anticipation we now can make! How it will cross all the bounds of what we call denominations, and overlook all the distinctions of visible Churches, and place on the right many that feared they were not of the Lord's people, and on the left many more that feared not but were confident they were his! Ah, what self-delusions, what dreams of self-righteousness, what presumptions of dead and fruitless faith, what hopes carelessly encouraged, never examined, will then flee away! what

terrible disappointments will take their place! We are already warned by the Lord, that "many shall seek to enter and shall not be able." That day will show those *many*, as it will also show "a multitude that no man can number," that "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb," and who are "therefore before the throne of God and the Lamb." Then shall be heard that cry of disappointed expectation, "*Lord, Lord, open unto us!*" and that answer from him that sitteth on the throne, "*I know you not;*" and then the plea of beginning anguish, "*Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence?*" Were we not communicants at thy table? Did we not come to thy solemn feasts? Were we not called by thy name and numbered with thy Church? — And then the final answer, the seal of exclusion and condemnation forever, "*I never knew you — depart from me.*" Ye were never mine. Ye were *among* my people, but never *of* them. Ye took my name: ye never received my Spirit.

Most perfect will be the purification of the Temple in that day; not only as it embraces the whole Church, so that none shall be left in its visible fellowship but God's true people; but the temple in the heart of each true child of God—"the habitation of God through the Spirit." In that work the Lord "will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, (his own royal priesthood of all believers,) and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness"—a pure offering, without spot or blemish, forever and ever. All their dross will be purged away. Every remnant of a corrupt nature will be consumed. The image of God in them will appear as untarnished, and

bright, and complete, as if sin had never defaced it. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in that day when I make up my jewels."

We return to the language of John the Baptist, describing the doings of that day of separation, of excommunication, and of ingathering: "*He shall gather the wheat into his garner.*" All will be joyfully harvested home; not a grain left behind; not a grain but shall be regarded as worth being laid up in the garner; all his true people perfectly known, each called by name, each recorded in the book of life, each treasured up and put away as crown jewels of his kingdom, for which a price far more precious than of gold that perisheth, has been paid by the Great King.

For that great ingathering, the Lord hath gone to prepare the many mansions in the Father's house. It will require the "*many*," for it will be a great harvest.

"But the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable." "Behold, the day cometh that shall burn as an oven." But let it be well observed here that the whole reference of John the Baptist, in the figure of the wheat and the chaff, and of our Lord, in the corresponding figure of the wheat and the tares, is to *the visible Church;* not to the whole race of man, including the Church, but to the Church, exclusive of all the rest of mankind. The judgment, indeed, will embrace all the quick and dead; but here its application to the visible Church alone is in view. It is a solemn thought indeed, that some of the most impressive accounts of the searchings of the judgment, and the separations it will make, and the condemnations that will ensue, are accounts of the Lord's sitting in judgment

on his visible Church, on his professing people, those to whom his ministers have given the baptism of water in his name, and who have belonged to the visible communion of his children. The chaff and the grain on the threshing floor, the tares and the wheat in the harvest field, like the wise and the foolish virgins when the bridegroom cometh, are the whole baptized Church, the whole company of professing Christians. But the chaff was never the grain, however intimately associated with it. Tares never were wheat, however near to it they grew; however like it they may have seemed; however enclosed with it in the same hedge. *Visibly*, they belong to the same harvest, because in the same field. *Really*, they are wholly unlike in nature. They came from different seed. The servants of the husbandman sowed the one; an enemy the other. What a testimony is here to what the Lord will find in his visible Church when he cometh—not only Christians of various degrees of holiness and growth, but Christians and those that never were Christians but in name and form; all baptized of water, but not all born again of the Holy Ghost; the old nature in many remaining unchanged and as essentially different from that of God's people, as weeds from wheat; as chaff that is fit only to be burned, from the good grain that is precious for the garner.

Brethren, where shall we be found in that day? How infinitely important is an honest judgment of ourselves now by the light of the word, lest we then be judged of the Lord to our everlasting confusion! Without that, how easily may we call ourselves Christians, go to the Christian communion, and go to the grave expecting the Christian's inheritance, and then, when the seal is set to

our portion, find out to our unspeakable dismay, that the Lord never knew us as his people. There is no danger of such delusion where there is the fear of it, and the diligent and prayerful effort by the grace of God to escape it.

But oh! that baptism of the Holy Ghost, without which none can see the Lord; that indwelling spirit of life, and love, and holiness; that daily growth toward the perfect mind of Christ; let us most earnestly seek it as our mission every day, our work for all of life, as much our constant calling in this world, as it is the work of the morning light to increase hour by hour unto the perfect day. Our earnest aspiring of the heart to be holy, will be the best evidence that we are holy. Our earnest seeking for a more complete baptism of the Spirit, will be the witness of the Spirit to a true baptism already attained, and the pledge of more. That growing in grace, towards the perfect day of grace, will be your evidence that the day has begun, that ye are children of light, and will be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Lord Jesus, send thy Spirit! Blessed Spirit of Christ, come down upon our hearts! More and more, day by day, baptize us, wash us, make us more holy, till the work of grace be finished in everlasting glory! Amen.

SERMON V.

THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST IN THE ASSEMBLIES OF HIS PEOPLE.

MATTHEW xviii. 20.

"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

THE presence of the Great and Good Shepherd wherever his people, however scattered, may be—how comforting the assurance of it! In the valley and shadow of death to be able to say "*thou art with me*," lights up the whole way and takes from the dying believer, all his fear. When the twelve Apostles had received their commission to carry the message of the Gospel to all people, and to assault, with the single weapon of the truth, the strong holds of Satan, in all the world; and when they looked at their utter impotence for such a work—twelve despised, persecuted, unlearned Jews, servants of a crucified master, to attack the entrenched philosophies, and superstitions, and ungodliness of all mankind, and that in direct conflict with all the power of rulers, all the resistance of priesthood, all the learning of the schools—oh! what a comfort it must have been to hear, immediately in connection with their commission, those assuring words of their Omnipotent Master, "*Lo, I am with you always.*"

Now, precisely what that precious promise was to the twelve Apostles, and has been to all the generations of

the Christian ministry, the promise in the text was given to be to the whole membership of Christ's true Church, to every gathering together of his people, in his name, to the end of the world. Let us study a promise so express and so dear.

The text contains these two prominent heads of discourse: *A promise*, and *a certain assemblage of persons to whom that promise is made*. We will first consider the peculiar description given of that assemblage, and then the contents of that promise.

1. What is the *peculiarity of the assemblage?* "Where two or three are gathered together in my name." Such is its brief description. The peculiarity is found in these words, "*in my name*," the name of Christ. What, then, are we to understand by this essential condition of the promise?

The original word here translated, *in*, may more properly be rendered, *unto*, making the passage read "gathered together *unto* my name." The same original expression occurs in the appointed form of baptism, where "baptizing them *in* the name of the Father," &c., should be read, "baptizing them *unto*, or *into*, the name," &c. Whether we read the text one way or the other, makes no difference in the doctrinal teaching contained therein, for both readings come to the same thing in substance. But I think we get at the fullness of the meaning of our Lord, and are enabled to read the text in its proper relative bearing and to understand the allusion contained in it to the name of the Lord, as connected with the temple worship of the Jewish dispensation, by taking it as *unto*, instead of *in* my name. We shall therefore read the text as if it

were written, "where two or three are gathered together *unto my name*, there am I in the midst of them."

You can hardly have avoided being struck with the very peculiar sense in which this expression "*my name*," and its equivalents, the "*name of the Lord*," "*the name of Jesus*," &c., are used in the scriptures. For example, where the prophet, speaking of Him who was to be born of a virgin, says: "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Do we find our Lord actually called by these names in the New Testament scriptures? By the name of God and "the Great God" he is called* in the New Testament; but neither in the New Testament nor in the usage of the Church do we find the title "Wonderful," or "Counsellor," or "Everlasting Father," applied as a name of Christ.

Again, in the words of the prophet, concerning the same divine person: "His name shall be called *Immanuel*, which being interpreted (says the Evangelist Matthew) is, God with us." But when the child of Mary came to be named, he was called Jesus, and this by divine direction; and nowhere in the New Testament writings is he called Immanuel. And yet we do not perceive that any were at a loss to account for this, or that it was ever objected against the claims of Christ by unbelieving Jews, as if because he was not actually called Immanuel, or Wonderful, or Counsellor, or Everlasting Father, &c., therefore the prophecies were not fulfilled in him. The reason is, that there was a peculiar use of such language which the Hebrews were accustomed to, and perfectly

* Titus ii. 13; Rom. ix. 5; 2 Pet. i. 1; Rev. xxi. 5–7.

understood, however different from our usage. You get a nearer view of it in this passage: "From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, *my name* shall be great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered *unto my name.*"* And again, where it is written of Christ that God "hath given him a name which is above every name, that *at the name of Jesus*, every knee should bow," &c.†

But is it to a *name* only that every knee is to bow, and that incense is everywhere to be offered. No, you answer. It is to the Being whose name it is. The name is evidently used there as an expression for Christ himself, as the great object of universal adoration. Thus, baptized unto *the name* of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is being baptized, consecrated, unto the Father, and the Son, and Holy Ghost. So, "*let every one that nameth the name of Christ* depart from iniquity," means every one that professes *Christ himself*, as his Master and Saviour. And thus, "His name shall be called Immanuel,"—means, he shall *be* "Immanuel, God with us:" and again, "His name shall be called Wonderful," &c—meant, he should *be* among men, really the "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God;" and whether he has ever been literally called by either of those names has no connection with the fulfilment of those prophecies in him. Thus we reach the text. "Where two or three are gathered together *unto my name*," means, gathered together *unto me*—unto me, with reference to all that I am towards sinners, to seek me as the object of their worship, as their trust and hope.

* Mal. i. 11. † Phil. ii. 9, 10.

But why, it may be asked, should our Lord employ this circuitous expression? Why not say, gathered unto *me*, instead of unto *my name*? We think that, besides its conformity to a mode of speech which the Jews were accustomed to, especially in the Old Testament writings, there was an important reference to the promise of God's presence in the assemblies of his people, under the previous dispensation.

You will remember the promise to the Jewish Church, which bore the same relation to that national and limited dispensation, that this in our text bears to the Christian and universal. It was given to that Church in these words: "*In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee and I will bless thee.*"* Now, I need not tell you that after the temple of Solomon was built, that was the place and the only place that answered this description, a place where God *had recorded his name*—in other words, where God especially manifested his presence among his people Israel. Accordingly, when Solomon consecrated that sanctuary, he said: "I have built a house for the *name* of the Lord God of Israel;" and in his consecrating prayer, he called that house "the place of which God had said, '*My name shall be there.*'" There was the altar of the burnt-offering of Israel, and nowhere else. It was not lawful to offer sacrifice but at that altar. There only was the mercy-seat, and the covenant, and the shekinah of glory. When the tribes went up to worship there, they were said to go up *unto the name of the Lord.* If they assembled anywhere else than around that one

* Ex. xx. 24.

altar, they were not gathered unto that name, for nowhere else had God appointed to meet and bless them.

Now, we think it was with reference to all this that our Lord employed the peculiar language of the text: "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them." It was to draw a most important contrast between the restrictive character of the dispensation of the law, and the free, the universal adaptation of the dispensation of the Gospel. Under the former, God's name was but in one place. His promise of special presence and blessing, was only to those whose sacrifices were offered *there*. Under the latter, the name, the grace, the fullness, of the blessing of Christ, the head of the Church, are present and ready, wherever the needy meet together unto him, to seek his face. Any house, any place in which such a congregation meets, is the house where God's name, Immanuel, God with us, is placed. It abides there as long as that congregation is there.

We have thus ascertained the sense of the peculiar language of the text. Let us now contemplate a little further the peculiarity of the assemblage described. They are evidently gathered together *for prayer*. This is manifest from the preceding verse. "If any of you shall agree on earth, as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven." Then follows the assurance of Christ's presence with two or three, showing that they are supposed to be gathered together to *ask* something, to *pray*. They are gathered *unto the name of Christ*. They bring their sacrifices of prayer and thanksgiving unto Christ, as the Jews brought their offerings unto the name of the

Lord, in the temple at Jerusalem. To come unto the name of Christ, is to come unto him in all those aspects, attributes and offices in which he is revealed to us under the several names applied to him in the scriptures. Is his name "Immanuel—God with us?" We must gather together unto him as the true God, essentially and perfectly divine—God *with us*, God manifest in the flesh, dwelling among us, because incarnate in our nature. Is his name "*Jesus*," because "*he shall save his people from their sins?*" Then we gather unto him as our Saviour, our refuge and only hope, as the Mediator between God and man, through whom alone we can obtain remission of our sins and eternal life. Is it written, "This is the name by which he shall be called, '*the Lord*, our righteousness?'" Then we must be gathered unto him as our righteousness, all our righteousness, and a most perfect and sufficient righteousness for the justification of all that come, because he is *Jehovah*, as well as our righteousness, whose perfect obedience to the law, and suffering its penalty as man, for us, is rendered infinitely meritorious for our complete justification. Is he represented as the Prophet of his Church, to enlighten it; the Priest of his Church, to atone for and sanctify and bless it; the King of his Church, to rule over and in the hearts of his people and to make them the partakers of his kingdom forever? Then the congregation described in the text, is gathered unto him, as unto one who fulfils towards them the three offices expressed in those three names—they come to him for the blessings which those names promise. They pray unto him as the true God. They pray through him as the true and only Mediator. They trust in him as their only Righteousness. He is

their altar, their atoning sacrifice, their incense, their only interceding priest, the holy temple in which God has placed his name, in which he manifests his glory, and in which sinners are brought nigh unto him, by the blood of Jesus. Thus, as the worshippers in Israel came on the great feast-days, from all parts of the earth, whither their dispersions had carried them, to the one holy temple at Jerusalem, all concentrating at that one point, all gathering unto that one altar, and sacrifice, and priesthood, and mercy-seat; all delighted to meet where God had placed his name, so are all true Christians, of all regions and all ages, united and centered in Christ. And just as the temple in Jerusalem, in all its magnificence and glory, stood forth upon the holy hill of Zion—so pre-eminent, so conspicuous, that the eye rested everywhere on that one commanding, engrossing object, so, in the hearts of those who truly gather themselves together, no matter from what corner of the earth, unto Christ, he is the glorious vision, the tower of strength, the citadel of hope, the mansion of grace, the brightness and fullness of the Godhead, that fixes every eye, delights every affection, engrosses every prayer, and concentrates upon himself the thankful trust of all believers. The whole true Church is always gathered together in spirit there, whether it be on earth or in heaven. Thus, it is a true and living Church. Thus, it is essentially *one*. Gather it in spirit, in heart, in trust, in love, in praise, anywhere but just there, unto that name, and its whole spiritual being is gone. It is no more a living Church of Christ. It may keep all the forms, and sacraments, and ministry, but it cannot be a living Church of Christ. Unto that one altar,

Christ; unto that one sacrifice, Christ; unto that one Priest to make intercession; unto that one temple of the Godhead, Christ, must the Church be gathered, and there alone must be its hope, or a Church it is but in name and visible form, exactly as the individual man, whose heart and hope are not centered there, can be a Christian but in name and form.

Thus, we have seen all the peculiarity of the assembly to which the promise of Christ's presence is given. And before we leave this part of our subject, I beg you will observe two things:

First, that whether the *number* gathered together be great or small, affects not the application of the promise; the presence of Christ is there. The specification in the text is reduced to the fewest members of which a meeting of praying people can consist—*two or three.* Thousands may pour out their hearts together, or a very little flock of Christ's people may be found to seek him in prayer and praise, while all around them is ungodliness and spiritual death; but like the light of God that shone in the dwelling of the Israelite in Egypt, on whose door-post was sprinkled the blood of the paschal lamb, while on all the land lay the deepest darkness, so is the Saviour in the midst of that little flock, and manifesting himself as "Immanuel, *God with us,*" "full of grace and truth," *the light of life.*

Observe, again, that the *place* where the gathering together unto Christ occurs, has no connection with the promised presence. *Place,* as we have seen already, was once most materially connected with the promise of the presence of God in the assemblies of his

people. As one nation was chosen out of all nations to be his people, and one tribe out of all their tribes to officiate in his worship, and one family of that tribe to be exclusively the priests, so was one land selected to be the holy land, and one city to be the holy city, and one house to be God's holy temple, and one chamber of that house to be holy above all others, because it was there his name was specially recorded, and there was the special sign of his presence in the visible glory above the mercy-seat.

In all this, there was reason then. But it is all passed away. The veil rent in twain from top to bottom, when Jesus, our only mediating priest, had finished the only sacrifice that can take away sin; the inner sanctuary of the temple, the holy of holies, thus thrown open to universal view; that was the sign from heaven, that in all such respects, old things were now to pass away and all to become new. The holy nation, the peculiar people, is now the universal Church, embracing the ends of the earth, "*the blessed company of all believers.*" Its holy priesthood, under Christ, is none other than that same "blessed company of all believers." "Ye, (saith St. Peter, addressing all of them,) are a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God, by Jesus Christ."* Their sacrifices are themselves—their bodies and spirits—in love, in faith, in prayer, in thankfulness, in praise, in obedience. The great priest of our profession, by whom every one of that universal priesthood of worshipping believers, presents himself acceptable unto God, is he, who having first presented himself a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, now "ever liveth to make intercession for all that come unto God by him." Restriction of place has

*1 Peter, ii. 5.

vanished with that whole peculiar system of which it was a part. The name of the Lord God is not now recorded in one spot of earth more than another; but is recorded, as no where else in earth or heaven it can be, in him of whom it is written, "His name shall be called *Immanuel*, which being interpreted is, God with us." That name indicates the true temple of our worship, the true and only sanctuary of our hopes. In Christ, our Lord, "dwelleth *all the fullness of the Godhead, bodily*." In the typical temple at Jerusalem, it dwelled only in symbol of wondrous light. In the real temple, our blessed Lord, it dwells in all the reality of its unsearchable glory, by a personal union of the divine nature with the human. In him is the only sacrifice for sin. In him is the true mercy-seat and the ever-living and prevailing intercession. To that glorious temple all the ends of the earth are commanded to look, and all places on earth are equally near.

Where, then, under the whole dome of the sky, is that little company—those two or three gathered to worship Jesus, to trust in him, to love him, to approach the Father by him, as Jehovah their Righteousness, Jehovah their King? Where are they? Is it that little band in the upper chamber on the day of Pentecost? is it Paul and Silas in the dungeon of Philippi? is it the humble gathering of a few persecuted ones, taking refuge in the dens and caves of the earth, hunted by the terrors of Pagan Rome, or by the fiercer, more unsparing persecutions of Papal Rome? is it the retired worship of some of you, my brethren, praying, one with another, in one of your own dwelling places; or the simple Christian household gathered for its daily family worship, with Bible in hand,

and looking unto Jesus? is it the two or three cast upon a desert shore, or alone in some Sodom of ungodliness, or afar off on the outskirts of our wide-spread population; the forest their church, the sky their shelter; no minister to preach to them, no ordained hands to give them the sacrament?—still, let them be only gathered together unto the name of Christ—there Christ is, as head of his Church, in all the riches of his grace and fullness of his promises, in their midst, to hear them, to bless them, as richly, as directly, as if the place were the consecrated Church, in all the sanctity and grandeur of the temple of Jerusalem, in its original glory.

That place, we said, may be without the presence of a minister of the Gospel. Still, if the two or three be gathered there unto the name, unto the mediation of Christ, the promise of his presence is theirs. There are reasons enough to show the value of an ordained ministry to the spiritual interests of the Church, without making the nearness of access between Christ and his people, in the least dependent on that agency. In coming to God, through Christ, there is no difference between one sinner and another, one believer and another, the least of the laity and the highest of the ministry. The mercy-seat, the blood of Jesus, the peace of God, are most freely accessible to all alike. A contrite heart and a living faith are equally demanded of all and equally qualify all.

That place, we said, may be without the presence of the sacrament of the Saviour's body and blood. The promise of the Saviour's presence is not dependent on the actual reception, under all circumstances, of that most precious sign and pledge of his presence with his people.

There are reasons enough for us to love it and wait on it, as a precious means of grace to the penitent and believing communicant, without placing it in any such essential relation. The same faith that obtains the presence of Christ among his people assembled at his visible table, obtains it also, when, without the visible table and sacramental signs, they are gathered unto that true and living bread which they signify.

We say the same of the consecrated Church. A more unwarranted, unevangelical idea cannot be entertained, than that because we consecrate our houses of worship, it is the teaching of our Church that prayer is more acceptable to God in such places than any where else; that the praying soul is any nearer the throne of grace kneeling within such walls, than when kneeling in the cottage or the forest; that the two or three are any more certain of the presence of Christ in that place, than if they were gathered together on the desert mountain, or in some cave of the earth; or that any part of a consecrated Church, as the chancel, the part about the communion table, is any more holy, or any nearer to Christ, or spiritually privileged, than any other part.

It was to avoid the Romish superstition that the place where the table stands and the Lord's supper is administered, is more holy, and more privileged, and nearer to God, than where the Gospel is preached and the people pray and praise, (a superstition quite in keeping with the Judaism of the Romish, and equally repugnant to the Catholic spirituality of the true Gospel faith,) that it was directed by the reformers of our mother Church, that the sacramental table, instead of a fixed, stone, altar-

shaped structure, as it had been under the Romish sway, should be a *table of wood*, and *movable*, easily taken from place to place, as the convenience of the congregation should require.* And, in particular denial that the consecrated building renders prayer therein any more acceptable or effectual, our Homilies declare that "the chief and special temples of God, wherein he hath the greatest pleasure and most delighteth to dwell, are the bodies and minds of true Christians;"† "that the Church or temple is counted and called holy, *not of itself, but because God's people resorting thereunto are holy*, and exercise themselves in holy and heavenly things;"‡ so that the house is holy because of the prayer of the people in it; and not the prayers acceptable in any degree because of the house. And again, our Homilies say, that "the Apostles and holy fathers knew that their prayers were heard in what place soever they made them, though it were in caves, in woods and in deserts;"§ and "they that worship God the Father, in spirit and in truth, in whatsoever place they do it, worship him aright."‖

We must be careful to keep clear in our minds, the broad distinction between the *faith* of a worshipping people and all those privileges and means of grace which are

* Our Rubric, before the communion office, directs that the communion table shall stand "*in the body of the church or in the chancel.*" Custom places it in the chancel. But what if it should be placed in the midst of the pews, in the body of the church, without rails around it, unfenced; how would it shock the reverence of some, especially of those who ascribe a very special holiness, not only to the table, but to the parts around it! And yet it would be placed just as consistently with the written order of the Church as if it were in the chancel.

† Hom Of Time and Place of Prayer. ‡ Hom. For Repairing the Church

§ Hom. On the Place and Time of Prayer. ‖ Hom. Of the Right Use of the Church.

appointed for the help of that faith. The two or three gathered unto Christ on some desert shore, and the hundreds assembled in the consecrated sanctuary, with the Gospel preached and sacraments ministered, certainly differ to a very important extent, in those things which are appointed as outward helps of faith and means of grace. But if you only suppose the faith in the hearts of the little band in the desert, with no outward means but their united prayers, to be as genuine as the faith of the privileged congregation with the full equipment of ecclesiastical appointments, the presence of the Lord in the riches of his grace is the blessing of the one, just as much as of the other. "*He that believeth* shall be saved."

II. We come now in the second part of this discourse to consider *the nature and preciousness of the blessings* embraced in the promise of the presence of our Lord in the midst of his worshipping people.

You will perceive that the text is a declaration of *omnipresence.* It is the declaration on the part of our Lord Jesus, that though there should be as many separate gatherings unto his name as there are separate places on the whole earth for them to be held in, all at the same precise moment, he is present in each and all. "*There am I in the midst*" of each assembly. But such omnipresence is an essential and incommunicable attribute of the Divine nature. Hence we know that it cannot be with reference to his human nature, his human body and soul, that our Lord will be present in the assemblies of his people. It is therefore in his divine nature as God, though in his office as Mediator, that his presence is promised. He that said, "before Abraham was *I am*,"

thus expressing his presence as God *in all time*, said also, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there *I am*," thus expressing his presence as God, the Redeemer, with his people *in all places*. But wherein, then, is the peculiarity of the promise? Is not Christ, as God, present to all people, in all places, whether they be gathered unto his name for worship, or against his name, for blasphemy? There is an *essential* presence—God is every where. There is a *gracious* presence—God is with the righteous—his presence is the exclusive blessing of his people. This it is that makes heaven. To all beings our Lord is present as the upholder of all; to all men as the Judge of all; to the lost in eternity, as the avenger of his law; to his people here as their Mediator, their strength, and light, and joy, and life; their shepherd, their salvation. To his people in heaven, he is present as their infinite portion and glory forever.

Jacob, when he fled from the face of Esau, well knew that at every step of that long jonrney, God was present. But the night on which, in a solitary place, he saw in his sleep, the mystic ladder reaching from heaven to where he lay, angels of grace coming and going thereon, and above, the Lord manifesting himself to the desolate heart of the patriarch, as he doth not unto the world, he exclaimed, "*surely the Lord is in this place—this is none other but the house of God and this is the gate of Heaven.*"*

It was the *relation* in which God was present to Jacob, then, and the *manifestation* of that relation, that made him present that night, in that place, as he had not been elsewhere. And such is the peculiarity of the presence

* Gen. xxviii. 11–18.

of Christ, as God, in the assemblies of his people. He is present as *their* God, *their Saviour;* as bearing a relation of most special nearness and preciousness to *them;* as full of grace for *them;* waiting to receive *their* prayers, manifesting himself unto them, in their hearts, by his Spirit, as he doth not unto the world; so that the desert, or dungeon, or den of the earth, if their gathering together be there, is "none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven."

It is manifestly the object of the text to teach that there is a special blessing to be expected, and therefore a special duty to be fulfilled, in the gathering of ourselves together for common prayer.

We have no lack of assurance that the presence of the Lord, in all its preciousness, is granted to the single contrite, praying heart. "To this man will I look (saith the Lord), even to him that is of an humble and contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word." There is a special promise to secret prayer. "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."* But if secret prayer has its advantages and special blessing, so has the united prayer—the social worship—the gathering together of the Lord's worshippers to join heart to heart, and voice to voice, in supplication and praise. Hence, in all ages, the great stress laid on public worship—first, the secret prayer within the veil of each one's own private sanctuary, then the coming of the several worshippers, each with the fire and incense of his solitary

*Matt. vi. 6.

offering, to put all together in one holy flame and one fragrant cloud, ascending before the mercy seat through the offering of Jesus, "once for all." These two methods of coming unto the name of Jesus must go together. If the private, under certain circumstances, can live without the social, the social cannot, under any circumstances, exist, except in form, without the private. He who knows the most of the pleasures, the consolations, the manifold blessings of secret prayer, will invariably be the best qualified and the readiest to partake in the privileges of more public prayer.

And now, brethren, let us bring all this subject into nearer application to our hearts and consciences. How ought we to meet the promise in the text? What corresponding emotions and efforts of mind does it demand of us? For what purpose is our Lord thus present in the assemblies of his people, gathered unto his name? They come to him in prayer. In what aspect—to what end, does he come into the midst of them? The promise of the Old Testament was—"In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and *I will bless thee.*" That promise, *I will bless thee,* is not in the New Testament text. It was enough for him who "is full of grace" to say under the Gospel dispensation, "I am in the midst of them." We know it must be to bless them. Why cometh the glorious sun, if not to shine? why the plenteous fountain of grace, if not to flow? why the very bread of God, if not to feed us? why the Shepherd of Israel in the midst of his flock, if not to distribute out of his fullness as every one hath need?

Now what is it we need, and what should we cultivate in

our hearts, in order that we may derive the more benefit from that presence? I answer, *faith*—more *faith* to realize that presence. To that one point I confine our application of this discourse. You remember with what joy the pious Israelites went up to the gathering of the tribes unto the name of the Lord at Jerusalem. "I was glad when they said unto me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand in thy gates, O Jerusalem. How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord."* Whence came this high joy—this large expectation? They believed the promise, "In the place where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." They expected to meet God—to come into his very presence, to receive out of his fullness. Who can wonder that they were glad to go up, and longed for the time to arrive? But how does this rebuke the spirit of Christian worshippers! It seems as if, with the enlargement of our privilege, had come the diminution of our disposition to embrace it. Why is it that the opportunities of public worship are so languidly appreciated by great numbers of those who consider themselves to be true worshippers? How is it that so many little difficulties serve as great hindrances to keep them from the house of prayer—difficulties which in matters of worldly interest the same people would be ashamed to make of so much consequence? Why is it that when we come up to the gathering of the people to the name of the Lord, we do it too much as only a reasonable duty, a befitting solemnity, a profitable thing in some general way, instead

*Psalms cxxii. 1, 2; lxxxiv. 1, 2.

of having our minds set on the one single and engrossing object of meeting and communing directly with the Lord where he has promised to be present? Oh! how should we see the pillar of cloud resting over the place of the congregation of the Lord's people, as it did of old over the tabernacle of Israel, saying, "the Lord is in this place; this is none other than the house of God and the gate of Heaven." With what joy should we hail the Sabbath of worship; with what high expectation should we enter into the courts of the Lord; how would our hearts be lifted up at those words, "The Lord is in his holy temple," had we more practical faith to realize what intellectually we so well believe. We must seek more of such faith. We must go to the assembling together of Christ's people, realizing who is there—who besides the visible company of believers—that great Shepherd of Israel in all his tenderness and love; that searcher of hearts seeing our every want, and weakness, and hindrance, and desire; that most merciful and compassionate High Priest who waits to take our poor, polluted, unworthy prayers, and offer them to the Father, with the merit and efficacy of his own intercession; that mighty Redeemer who hath all power in heaven and earth for the very purpose of answering the prayers, and supplying the wants, and overcoming the adversaries of his people. What more appropriate song for a company of believers, gathered unto his name, can there be, than that which we so often sing in our assemblies—"O, come, let us sing unto the Lord; let us heartily rejoice in the God of our salvation." What needest thou, Christian pilgrim, in thy journey—Christian soldier, in thy warfare—Christian laborer, in thy

work? What needest thou, poor sinner, in thy unworthiness, and weakness, and temptation? What wouldst thou that the Lord should do unto thee? Think what thy need is, when thou goest where the Lord is in the midst of his assembled people. Is it that the eyes of your understanding may be more opened to see the things of the Spirit of God? Is is that you may be enabled more entirely to overcome the world? Is it that you may be led more powerfully, more habitually, by the Spirit of God, as a child of God? Be prepared with your petition, whatever it be. "The Lord is in his holy temple." He is waiting to give thee audience. You see him not. He sees you. It is "the accepted time." Lift up your heart unto the Lord. The Lord increase our faith! and grant us to know by sweet experience how his presence can turn our darkness into day, and make us drink of rivers of living water in "a dry and thirsty land where no water is."

SERMON VI.

THE NATURE AND CONDEMNATION OF SIN.

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1 John iii. 4.

"Sin is the transgression of the law."

The essential foundation of all right appreciation of the Gospel of our salvation, is a right view of that from which it is our deliverance—*sin;* its nature, its evil, its condemnation. To think of understanding what Christ has done to save us, without first learning what sin has done to ruin us; to think of estimating aright the exceeding preciousness of the redemption, before our eyes have been opened to see the entireness of our condemnation, is the sure way to come short in all our hopes of the grace of God, as revealed in the person and offices of Jesus Christ.

We propose, at this time, a consideration of sin, as the basis of the knowledge of the Saviour. To ears listening for such attractions of discourse as are independent of the vital seriousness of the subject, we can promise but little. To hearers who hear for spiritual profit, and whose interest is proportioned to the importance of the subject, we could not propose one more calculated to fasten their closest attention. May the Spirit of the Lord be our guide, teaching me so to speak, and you so to hear, that all of us may

be accounted before God as good stewards of the manifold riches of his grace.

1. *What is sin?* The text answers in one of the plainest and most concise statements that words could furnish—"*Sin is the transgression of the law.*" Suppose you were inquiring concerning sin in general—not merely against God, but against any human government—the same answer serves universally. Sin or crime, any where, before any tribunal, is neither more nor less than the transgression of the law. As law is the only measure of obedience, its transgression is the only measure of disobedience. As its fulfilment is innocence, its violation is guilt. If there be no law, there can be no transgression, and consequently no sin. By the law, therefore, is the only knowledge of sin. Nothing else but law can be admitted to take part in the determination of what is sin. These elementary truths are equally applicable to all laws, human and divine.

Returning then to the nature of sin against God, as defined to be the transgression of God's law, you will see at once that all depends on what that law is. Here we have no difficulty. The plain answer is, *the revealed will of God.* If he hath not made known to us his will—if he hath not written it, either on the tables of our conscience, or in his visible works, or in his scriptures, so that if we will, we may know it, it is not law for us. But if he have so revealed it, then, though by our negligence and indifference we may be ignorant of it, it is law for us, and sin is its transgression.

It matters not how the will of God is made known to us—whether by the voice of natural conscience or by the

written word—whether in the brief compendium called the ten commandments, or as they are expanded and applied in any precept of the scriptures—whether you find it formally declared, or only informally indicated—whether the thunders of Sinai or the mercies of Calvary be our teachers—a chapter of Moses or a sermon of Jesus: whatever, in any way, we learn, or may learn, to be God's will for us, that is *the law*. Thus, a promise of the Gospel is law, because it essentially implies the duty of embracing it. Thus all the love of God in Christ is the giving of his law, because it publishes and seeks to write on our hearts the obligation of love, and gratitude, and obedience, in return. Thus, in an important sense, the Gospel is all law, and the very strongest publication of the law; because not only does it confirm and establish it, but declares it under additional sanctions; makes its violation the more guilty, and enlarges our knowledge of the divine will in all things. The injunction to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is law, and the exhortation to repent is law, and to embrace every promise made to penitent sinners in Christ, and to set our hearts upon the blessedness of his kingdom—all this is as truly God's law to us, as the ten commandments of Sinai.

2. "The law of God is *perfect*." It extends to the whole of man; it leaves no part of him, no faculty of body or mind, no thought, no affection, no deed, no moment, unembraced. Human laws are necessarily exceedingly imperfect; they *must* leave out the government of the whole inner man, and all the secret springs of man. But God looks upon the heart, and therefore legislates for the heart; and as the fountains out of which are the issues

of life dwell there, it is there, where no other law can reach, that his will is heard in its most solemn and searching requirements. God's law is perfect; nothing in us or by us is too minute or secret to escape its provisions. These truths are elementary and self-evident. To suppose that there is any thing in us to which his law does not extend, is to suppose that man, in something, is not under God's government; in other words, is independent of the will of his Maker.

3. Another self-evident truth: God's law requires of all *a perfect obedience.* What else can it require? Was there ever a law of any sort that did not require the same? To say that a law requires but a partial obedience, is to say that only part of it is really law. In that part in which it does not require perfect obedience, or in that degree in which disobedience may be tolerated, it may be advice, but it cannot be law. To say that God does not require us to come up to the fullness of a certain commandment, is to say that in its fullness it is not his commandment. Whatever is law, must by its nature require complete obedience. Its transgression must be sin.

Here, then, the question comes again, *What is sin?* We are prepared with the answer, because we have ascertained the law. Whatever falls short of, whatever transgresses, in outward deed, or inward thought, or affection, any, the least part of that will or law of God, from the earliest moment of your accountableness to the latest, is sin. What! replies some hearer, am I marked in God's remembrance, with such awful strictness? Can I fail in nothing, in not even a thought, or a moment of perfect

fulfilment, but it is sin; and sin to be brought into judgment? You can answer for yourself, if you will repeat the necessary definition of sin—"*the transgression of the law.*" Is it not the same under all governments? Can you come short in any thing of the law of this land, without being guilty before it? The government may be too imperfect to take cognizance of your guilt, but that does not make you the less guilty. It may be able to *prove* nothing against you, because its eye is not in every place beholding the evil and the good; but your guilt is all the same. And now let us advance one step further.

There is a passage in St. James' Epistle which reads thus: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all."* It sounds unreasonable, but we will show you that it is nothing peculiar to the *divine* law. The meaning is, *that every single sin is the breaking of the whole law.* The mind of James was probably led to the utterance of this principle, by one of those traditionary notions whereby the Jews, in his day, made void the law.

The Scribes taught that by the strict observance of some one requirement of the law, a man would secure the favor of God, though he neglected all others. The Pharisees, therefore, used to select some prominent duty, such as the keeping of the Sabbath day, or paying the tenth; and then, with whatever their traditions added to them, be exceedingly scrupulous and exact in those particulars, however negligent in every thing else. The idea was that of compensation. It was imagined that by a measure of strictness not required, they would make up

*James, ii. 10.

for, in any one point, the neglect of what was required in other points. This singular notion, we apprehend, has a wider habitation than the minds of the Jewish Pharisees. It is a form of self-righteous delusion, which, however unreasonable, has been the hope of thousands who have enjoyed the light of the Gospel. What else is the idea practically so prevalent, and that comforts so many, now-a-days, that if you do well in one line of duty, you will not be condemned if you neglect another; if you attend to one table of the law, you may be at ease though the other have been forgotten; if you have led a moral life it will answer, though you have not led a religious life—good works towards man will suffice, though you have been habitually disobedient towards God. It was this idea of *compensation*, as if we could ever compensate for disobedience to God, that gave rise to all that system of will-worship, the divers fastings and vain repetitions of prayers, and minute scrupulousness in certain self-imposed outward forms, or penances, while the whole spirit of true obedience was wanting, on which the Saviour so often and so solemnly pronounced those words—"*wo unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, Hypocrites.*" Exactly the same, though in a Christian dress, is that which in the Romish Church, under the traditions of Popery, making equally void the Gospel, produces corresponding fruits among nominal Christians. The man who cannot be persuaded to eat meat on Friday, can easily profane the name of God every day and be comforted. Be very exact in keeping certain days, repeating certain prayers, and doing certain penances, and visiting certain shrines, and attending mass, and confessing to a priest, and all will be well.

Against all this, whatever shape it may assume, according as it may appear among Jews, or Romanists, or Protestants, (for the human heart will produce it in some shape among all,) stands the declaration of St. James, "whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." The meaning is not, that to violate any one precept of the law, is to violate every precept, or is as guilty as if every other were violated. Certainly the commission of one sin cannot necessarily involve the commission, or the guilt, of all sins. But the law of God is *one*. It contains various precepts, but it is one law. Sin is the transgression of the law in its oneness, its integrity. To break it anywhere, breaks it entirely; all its authority is resisted, all its honor is injured, all its condemnation is incurred. It is a chain of many links. One link broken, the chain is as perfectly broken as if many links were broken. One sin makes you as truly a violator of the whole law of God; brings you as really under its verdict of guilty, forfeits as entirely your innocence or righteousness at its bar, as any number of sins.

But is there anything new in this? Is it not just what you are all familiar with under the laws of the land? Let us suppose a covenant or contract between man and man. It may have its several articles, but it is all one covenant. Now, should one of the parties keep the whole, except that he fails in a single article, will not the law decide that, in the failure of that one article, the whole covenant is broken, and the other party entirely released, and the penalty, whatever it be, all incurred? And if the failure be in two or more articles, instead of one, you know that the covenant is no more entirely, though it may be much

more flagrantly broken. And you well know that before the law of the land, it would avail nothing to save the party in default from the penalty or forfeiture resulting from a broken covenant, should he plead that he had fulfilled it in every thing but one single article. The law of the land would consider that the keeping of all but one is no justification for failure in that one. It would answer: the covenant is all broken; you have forfeited all that you were to get by it; your claim on the other party is all lost; he has a perfect right to exact from you the whole penalty; justice cannot help you; law has nothing for you but its condemnation. The clemency of the other party is all you have to look to.

Now that represents precisely the state of a transgressor of God's law. God has been pleased to enter into covenant with us. He might have said simply "*Do this,*" without annexing any promise of eternal life; and then it would not have been a covenant, but simply a law. But he has been pleased to say, *Do this and live,* annexing the promise of life eternal to the keeping of his law. And he has annexed the penalty; that is, the loss of life eternal, to every violation of that covenant. "Cursed is he, (in other words, condemned is he to the penalty of the law) who *continueth not in all things* written in the book of the law to do them." You observe, the condition of the covenant is *continuance* in *all things* to do them; not merely during part of life, but all of life; not in some things, but in *all things.* Now, you are a transgressor of the law. It is of no importance at present to ask how often, or under what aggravating circumstances, you have transgressed. It is enough that you have transgressed. The

covenant thus is all broken. God is perfectly released from his promise of life. You have forfeited all that you were to gain by obedience. He can exact from you all the penalty of a law entirely broken. It will avail nothing in point of law and justice to plead that you have kept the covenant in other particulars. The breach remains in that one particular, and cannot be healed. To be innocent, or righteous, in the sight of the law, by your own obedience, is now forever impossible. Add another transgression or a thousand—you will thereby increase your guilt and your punishment; but the covenant is no more entirely, though it is certainly more flagrantly violated. All this we showed you is just the parallel of what takes place under all human law. And thus the principle announced by St. James, is a general principle of law, whether human or divine: "*Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*"

4. And now we are prepared for another step. It is essentially involved in the great but perfectly simple and obvious principles of law and obedience of which we have spoken, that the condemnation of a sinner before God, essentially and neeessarily takes place immediately upon the transgression of his will. In other words, the sinner is "*condemned already.*"

One of the most common misapprehensions, and one which exercises the strongest influence in keeping men insensible to the awfulness of their state before God, as sinners impenitent and unpardoned, is an idea, directly the contrary of what I have thus declared. It is a very common thought, that the condition of sinners on earth who continue impenitent, is neither one of positive wrath

or peace; not of condemnation; assuredly not of acceptance; but a condition, the decision upon which is deferred to a day of trial hereafter, in the future world. Meanwhile they imagine they are contributing to make that future decision favorable, or unfavorable, according as, by evil deeds or good deeds, they are running up an account on one side or the other, in the book of God's remembrance.

Now, I can imagine no reason why this thought should be entertained, except it be the supposition that God, however he be the All-seeing Witness of every sin, to whom "the darkness and the light are both alike," does not so notice sin as soon as it is committed, as in his own mind to decide upon what it is and what it deserves. Men have a vague idea of the day of judgment. They know that in human affairs, there can be no condemnation till the formal trial, because till then, since the human judge ascertains transgression only by examination of witnesses, the truth cannot be determined: and so they imagine the day of judgment is to *ascertain* guilt; to enable the Judge of all the earth to decide upon the merits of each case, as if God were not himself always witness and always judge, always perfectly knowing, always perfectly measuring and deciding upon every transgression. No, brethren, the day of God's judgment is not to assist the knowledge or counsels of him who knoweth all things. It is not to unveil any thing in us that is not now all marked and open to him who searches the secrets of all hearts. It is not that God may then *form* a decision as to us, which he had not formed before; but to declare, and vindicate, and execute before the assembled angels of heaven, and the assembled generations of all mankind, the condemnation

or the justification already passed upon all before we died. The essential judgment, except as to the infliction of the penalty, is going on all our life-time. We are at each moment perfectly known and weighed in the balance of the law of God. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, doth not he know?" You see, in a moment, that it cannot be possible but that as God is witness to every sin, and the law is simply his own will, so he must judge every sin immediately by that law, and the sinner must at once stand before him instantly as he sins, in his true position, as a convicted transgressor, condemned already. Such would be the case under human laws, were it not for the great imperfections which necessarily belong to their administration in the hands of men. But what saith the Lord upon this point? "*He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned.*" No, he is delivered from condemnation, because he has taken refuge in Christ. But proceeds the verse: "*He that believeth not is condemned already.*"* What gives these declarations a special impressiveness is, that they come from Him who is to be the Judge, and to pronounce the sentence of the last day.

It is upon this actual condition of sinners in the present life, that all the structure of the Gospel is erected. It brings *salvation* to every one that believeth; but in so doing it pronounces all of us *lost* till we embrace it. Jesus, our Saviour, "came to seek and save that which was *lost.*" If we are not now already *lost*, we are not those whom he came to save. He came "to preach deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that

* John iii. 18.

are bound." If any of you are not already condemned before God for your sins, then his law has not laid hand upon you; you are not captives under its arrest; you are not bound; its prison doors have not been shut upon you. You are therefore not among those to whom the message of the Saviour's grace is addressed. He came to give salvation, not to those who may be lost, under a judgment not yet given, but who are lost already; to give deliverance, not to those who are in danger of condemnation, but to those who are condemned already. Hence it is written: "There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."* They are *now*, in this present life, delivered from condemnation, because they are in that refuge; they have become believers in, and thus partakers of Christ Jesus. Of course it follows, that to all who are not in Christ Jesus, there is *now* the condemnation of God.

And here, if you ask me what then is the difference in regard to condemnation between your state in the present life and what it will be in the world to come, in case it continues as it now is unto death, I see but one answer, and I feel that it is an awful answer, and I would that it were deeply felt as an awful thing to be true of any body. There is no difference but in one particular. The sinner who has not availed himself of the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, is not *finally, irreversibly*, condemned. Your day of grace and long suffering is not ended yet. You have still an accepted time and a day of salvation. The condemnation is perfect, but the prison door is not forever barred. You are bound, but your bonds may be loosed. You may yet be persuaded to listen to Him who preaches

* Rom. viii. 1.

deliverance to the captive. But your time to die may come before your repentance. Then the door is fast forever. Then the voice of a Saviour's grace is heard no more. Your condemnation abideth without end; the same precisely that abideth now, only then a condemnation *sealed up* forever.

5. We proceed to one more position, which, though it has been included in what has been already said, we wish to make more distinct and prominent. It is this: *A single transgression of the law of God makes you liable to its whole penalty.* "The wages of sin is death." The declaration is not, that death is the wages of sins of a certain number, but of *sin*—any sin. This is but a figurative form of the original declaration, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Adam incurred that penalty by a single transgression. And again, another form of the same thing: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." If the continuance of perfect obedience be not unbroken, if it be not in every hour and moment, if it be not in all things required by the will of God, the law is transgressed, and the wages of sin are due.

It is one thing to speak of penalty being equally due to one sin as to many, and a very different thing to speak of it as being due in *an equal degree* of severity. Death is universally the wages of sin, without reference to this or that sin, few sins or many; death of the body in the loss of its soul till the resurrection, death of the soul in the loss of that favor of God which is life, and that loving kindness of God which is better than life—death spiritual in everlasting banishment from God. But that eternal

banishment from God, and loss of all spiritual life and hope, will be accompanied with more or less of the positive infliction of the pains of hell, according as you have accumulated sin upon sin; according as you have done so in the midst of the light of the Gospel, or in comparative darkness; according as your privileges, and mercies, and opportunities have abounded, and you have resisted convictions, trifled with serious impressions, and quenched the influences of the Spirit of God that would have persuaded you to repentance.

I need not further show the proof of our present position, that a single transgression of the law of God makes you liable to the law's penalty. You perfectly well know that such is the case under all laws. One murder incurs the penalty of death as fully as twenty; one theft as fully as a hundred. Who ever heard of the law delivering a criminal from the whole penalty of murder, on the ground that he had committed the crime but once? And how strange it would seem, to see a fellow creature, with the blood of his neighbor on his hands, and the fear of the law before him, administering consolation to his trembling heart by saying, "I never took life before, therefore I cannot be condemned to die for this."

But, my brethren, is not this precisely the sort of peace which they who neglect the salvation of God are continually ministering to their souls? That they have very often transgressed the divine law, they freely own. But that therefore they have forfeited all title to God's favor—lost all reason to hope for eternal life on the ground of their own merits—incurred a positive condemnation, and are now abiding under it, and have nothing to look for but the wrath of God, after death, unless they flee to a

better hope and righteousness than any within themselves—they cannot admit. And why? The only reason given is that, though sinners indeed, they have not sinned *to this or that extent.* We beg to remind them, that to what extent they have sinned is not now the question. "*Sin is the transgression of the law,*" whether one or a thousand; and condemnation necessarily follows upon sin, whether it be once committed or a thousand times. The law of God and the law of man are in principle exactly alike in this respect. The question of the extent to which you have sinned is necessary to the determination of the *amount* of your guilt, but enters in no wise into the question of the fact that you are guilty. Besides, the amount of your sins is a subject of inquiry to which you are not equal, except to see that it is broader than the sea, deeper than the sea, enough to make you hide your face in the dust, and seek the mercy of God with a broken and contrite heart. When all the history of your whole life can be read by you, all the movements of thought, all the working of affection, and desire, and motive, all moments, all things done within as well as without, all things left undone within and without—when you are competent to read that whole history in all its connections, each moment, with your circumstances, your light, your privileges, your opportunities, all those things which will make it more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than for the impenitent of this day and this land; yea, when you are competent to read all this history in such comparison with the law of God that you shall see its sins as they are seen by him, before whose holiness even the heavens are unclean, then you may attempt to justify

yourselves by measuring the extent of your transgressions. Meanwhile, it is very easy so to read that history as to see that you have sinned enough to be brought in guilty before God, and therefore under condemnation and wrath, till you shall be found in Christ Jesus, rescued in that ark.

And now, having gone over the ground thus finished, I am very conscious that I have been bestowing much attention upon principles not only exceeding plain, but very familiarly known and recognized among all descriptions of men; and the question occurs, how is it that principles so easily understood and acknowledged in ordinary matters of human jurisprudence, should need so much explication when applied to divine? For example, when we speak of the single transgression of a *human* law being enough to incur its condemnation, we speak what every body knows. None think of charging the law with undue severity. It must be so, in the very nature of law. But as soon as the same is asserted of transgression of the law of God, immediately there is a revolt. It cannot be. It is incredible that the Judge of all men should be so severe. And this, too, will arise in the breasts of men who, as judges in the land, are in the practice of administering judgment on precisely the same principle. How is this to be accounted for?

I apprehend the answer is not difficult. Men realize that they have a deep interest in the principles of criminal law between man and man, and they therefore think of them enough to understand them, at least in the elements of which we have spoken. The subject is earthly; but the whole matter of the law of God is unearthly—it

does not force itself upon daily thought. It is easy not to realize that you have any thing of great moment depending on it, and therefore its interest, its nature, and its application, are not considered, except in the most dreamy way.

Again, in human affairs, men are compelled to feel the absolute necessity of a wise and strictly administered government of law. But it is precisely here that they allow themselves, for want of consideration, to realize nothing as to the relations between them and God. Nothing do they practically believe in so little, whatever speculatively they may acknowledge, as God's moral law reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart, strictly administered on the essential principles of all law, and having its final assize and sentence, when "God will bring *all* things into judgment, with every secret thing."

Again, there is nothing to warp our views when considering the proper process of things under human tribunals. We are not the accused. We feel that our interests are identified with the strict execution of the law. The true principles seem self-evident, because our eye is single. But before God we are all the guilty ones. Impenitent men feel that all their hope out of Christ is in trusting that God's law will prove to be some such law, in its principles and decisions, as no law can be. Thus their eye is perverted, and when they think at all on the subject, it is to deceive themselves with expectations which a candid consideration would teach them can end only in the bitterest disappointment.

But again, in human jurisprudence we easily distinguish between the judge, to condemn according to law, and the ruler, to pardon according to dictates of mercy.

We see those offices in different hands, and well comprehend that it is the duty of the one to sentence to death the very man to whom the other may grant a pardon. But in God those offices are united. He only can bind and loose, condemn and forgive; and because thus united in God, those two offices become confounded in men's thoughts, till that of the Judge, administering the law, is lost sight of, and nothing remains upon the judgment seat but a Being of boundless compassion, to pardon the transgressor. They know perfectly well that a wise human ruler will exercise his power to pardon only when the great interests and sanctions of the law are not thereby impaired. But they do not ask whether the law of God must not be treated with equal respect. Thus they carelessly take refuge in the certainty that God is plenteous in mercy, not inquiring whether there be not some one only way of administering his mercy, some certain conditions on which alone, out of regard to the guilt of sin and the honor of his law, his mercy shall be dispensed, which they have utterly neglected.

There is an injunction of St. Paul of the greatest consequence to all safe conclusions, as to what you may expect under the law of God. "*Behold* (saith he) *the goodness and severity of God.*"* The Apostle had in his mind the severity of God in casting off and punishing the Jews for their unbelief and rejection of the gospel, and his goodness in admitting the Gentiles to its blessings. *We* have now in view, in the just application of the Apostle's words, the severity of God in holding as guilty, and in condemning to eternal misery, all trans-

*Rom. xi. 22.

gressors of his law; and on the other hand, his goodness in mercifully providing, through the atoning sacrifice of his own Son, Jesus Christ, such plenteous redemption that every penitent sinner, coming unto Jesus, shall have everlasting life. We must behold the character and ways of God in both these aspects, or we cannot know him. The goodness is no more his character, no more essential or honorable to his nature, than the severity. The red, as well as the violet of the rainbow, is essential to the pure white light of the solar ray. God, as Judge, must be "a consuming fire" to the wicked and impenitent, for the same reason that, as a merciful Father, he is eternal life to the penitent sinner coming unto him through the atonement of Christ. The terrible retribution that he brought on the Jews, for their unbelief, and with which he still visits them, is a chapter in the history of his government, to teach us its character, as much as any book of his goodness to the children of men. What the Apostle calls "the terrors of the Lord," are as essential to our right knowledge of him as his mercies—the sentence of the law condemning the sinner, as the grace of the gospel justifying the believer in Jesus—Sinai as much as Calvary. They are parts of his ways, neither of which can be rightly known as setting forth his dealings with man, without the other. The same indeed must we say of all governments. Wherever a wise law is wisely executed, there is both *a goodness* and *a severity* to be beheld, if we would appreciate its character. *Severity*, in this application, means not *hardness*, but *strictness*. The goodness of a ruler to pardon the offender is weakness, if there be not also a strictness to punish iniquity. The judge of your

criminal court shows a righteous *severity*, when he so administers the law that crime shall be sure of his sentence in the strict execution of the law. The Judge of all the earth is righteously severe, when he holds every transgressor of his law strictly subject to its penalty, and will admit to the enjoyment of his saving grace none but those who seek it in the way of his own appointment—the atoning sacrifice and all prevailing mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. I must behold that severity, that strictness, that certainty that the law of God will not clear the guilty, that if I appear at that bar in no righteonsness but my own I must be condemned and lost, or I cannot take a right view of the wonderful grace and mercy of God, in providing eternal redemption for us by the sacrifice of his only begotten Son; nor can I see my absolute need of my fleeing for refuge to the hope that is there set before me. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." The only way to know ourselves as sinners, is to measure ourselves by the will of God. The only way to know what we have to fear as sinners, is to behold the severity of God in enforcing the penalty of the violation of his will, as exhibited in his word, and in all his dealings with mankind. The only way to get a right sense of our need of the ark of salvation provided in Christ Jesus for all that will flee to it, is to behold and see in what hopeless ruin the flood of the wrath of God, which is coming upon all unrighteousness of men, must overwhelm us, unless we are found in that refuge. Thus, by the law is the knowledge of the gospel, as it is the essential lesson whereby we learn the need of the gospel. And thus, in the words of St. Paul, it is "our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we may

be justified by faith"—a schoolmaster that teaches a very humiliating lesson indeed, and teaches it very sternly and inflexibly, and by many inflictions of the rod upon our consciences and wills, which are so slow to learn in such a school, but whose lesson, nevertheless, is the beginning of wisdom, the voice of one that prepareth the way of the Lord.

And now what, my brethren, has been our object in all this discussion of the law of God? Let me answer the question plainly. It has been that we might, by the blessing of the Holy Spirit, accomplish one most needful, most precious, most kind, but most painful work in the minds of a large class of this congregation. But, to make myself better understood. You, my hearer, let me suppose, have not sought the Lord. You have no reason to believe that if death should overtake you as you now are, it would find you in Christ, having fled thither from condemnation, trusting there, and sheltered there, as under the curtains of the Lord's sanctuary. Now the object of all this discourse has been one which I know that no mere reasoning of mine, without the sealing power of God's Spirit, can effect: to lead you to feel that *you have no hope of salvation.* It is to take away from you all thought that in such a state as yours there is any such thing as salvation for you; it is to lead you up to the bar of God, *now*, before the final trial comes, and induce you to judge your case in the presence of his law, and see what must be the certain issue, if, hereafter, when the books shall be opened, you come before it in your present state. I could not attempt a kinder office. To make you hopeless, that you may seek that only hope which will not make

you ashamed, is the greatest kindness. Then *where are you now?* Under the Gospel? No. Under its revelations, its invitations, its responsibilities, you certainly are. It is proposed to you. But have you accepted it? No. You have lived to this day in the rejection of all its offers of salvation. You have been constantly called to its embrace, and have constantly refused; so that under the Gospel, as in any sense a hope or a protection, you are not. Then where are you? Of course under the law; the strict, unmitigated, inflexible, holy, heart-searching, heart-requiring law of God, every transgression of which is sin and condemnation. To that law exclusively must you look for justification. If it have nothing against you, you have hope. But mark, your case all hangs on that one condition. You are *shut up unto the law* for hope. Light can come upon your prospect for eternity but from that one quarter. If you have not transgressed the law, it will justify you; if you have, it will condemn you. "The *goodness* of God" in pardoning sinners, you cannot behold for any comfort or hope, because that is revealed only to those who seek it by embracing the mediation of Christ. It is only "the *severity* of God," as a just and holy Judge, most strictly enforcing and maintaining his law, that you are permitted to behold from your present position. Now what is your verdict upon your case, arraigned for your own decision at that bar? What does your whole life testify? What witnesses stand up against you, from all your thoughts, and affections, and words, and deeds? Behold that great cloud of witnesses coming into court to appear against you, brought from all the mercies, and privileges, and talents, which you have not improved in God's

service. See how sternly *Conscience* demands to be heard, and testifies that you have always loved the world, to the exclusion of its Maker, and sought your happiness in its service, to the exclusion of the service of God. But alas! what witness is this that now comes in, claiming that none else need be heard. Meek, and gentle, and loving, but decided and fixed. It is the Gospel. It comes with all its offers of peace, all its invitations and promises, all its love and grace. It holds up the blood of Jesus Christ which was shed for you, and cries, "These all hath he rejected. I called continually, but he refused. I stretched out my hands, but he did not regard. He despised all my counsel, and would none of my reproof." Oh! poor sinner, what answer can you make to such testimony? What can you say to escape the certain condemnation of God? Whither will you flee? No where can you flee, if all this shall take place with you after this present day of grace is over. But I tell you where now you can flee. That rejected blood of Christ still cries, *come*. The door of access to the mercy of God, through Christ, is still open, and over it is written still, *come*. There is boundless mercy in God for you, if only in that way, Jesus Christ, you will seek it. And will you heap sin upon sin, judgment upon judgment, by refusing to come? God forbid! God, in mercy to your soul, persuade you to come, and be found holding on to the cross of Jesus, pleading his blood, abiding in him as the ark of God, in that day when you shall be called, with all of us, to appear at his judgment! Amen.

SERMON VII.

THE GREAT FEAST AND THE VAIN EXCUSE.

LUKE xiv. 16, 17, 18.

"Then said he unto them, a certain man made a great supper and bade many, and sent his servants, at supper time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready. And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse."

ONE of our Lord's objects in delivering this parable, was to illustrate, by way of prediction, the reception which would be given in the world to those offers of salvation with which his Apostles were soon to be sent forth. The same is our object, in the present selection of this parable, or so much of it as the text contains. We wish to draw your attention to the treatment which the gospel invitation receives from the great mass of those to whom it is sent, and to the aspect of such a reception in the sight of God.

"*A certain man* (we read) *made a great feast.*" That *certain man*, is represented in the corresponding parable, given by St. Matthew,* *as a King;* and the *great feast* is there described as *a marriage feast;* and the occasion of it, as the marriage of the King's son. These several particulars are given by the Lord, with the evident design of enhancing the dignity and excellence of the festival, and consequently the honor and favor shown by the King to the "*many*" whom he bade to it; and their duty,

* Matt. xxii. 2.

as a matter of thankfulness, as well as of obedience, to embrace the invitation.

Now you can have no doubt that, under that figure of a great feast thus provided, is intended to be represented all that eternal life and glory in the presence, and favor, and communion of God and the Lamb, to which we are all so earnestly called—a feast of blessedness which God only could make; and to which his sovereign mercy alone could have bade the needy, and perishing, and unworthy, of all nations, to come. It is a *marriage*-feast. The bridegroom is the only begotten Son of God. So intimate is the union which takes place between him and all those who embrace the invitations of his grace, and come unto him, and receive out of his fullness, and live by him—so affectionate, and tender, and inseparable is that union, that it is likened, in the parable, to a marriage union. Believers in Jesus are espoused unto their Lord. The covenant between them, is a marriage covenant. By virtue thereof, they become, for all the purposes of their sanctification, and justification, and life, in and through him, "one flesh," "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh"—so that their debts, and wants, and infirmities, are his to bear for them; and his righteousness and Spirit are theirs to possess in him. Thus, the whole company of true believers in Jesus, as composing his living Church, are called in Scripture his Bride; and on that glorious day, when all believers shall have been made ready to be received unto Christ, in his kingdom on high, having been perfectly cleansed from all sin, and made, in body and spirit, perfectly conformed unto himself, then shall take place "the marriage of the Lamb." The Lord will receive his

perfected people unto himself; that where he is, there they may be also. As a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle, they will all be "arrayed (for a marriage garment) in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." All that Christ hath obtained, by the purchase of his obedience and sacrifice, they will be made to share, as their marriage dower. They will sit with him on his throne. They will enter into the joy of their Lord. His mind will be perfectly in them; his glory all upon them. He, the heir of the kingdom, in his own right; they, inheriting all things, as joint-heirs with, and in virtue of their union unto him. "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."

The maker of the feast is represented as sending out his servants, "*to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are ready.*"

The point of time in the gospel history, was when the Apostles received their full commission to go and preach the Gospel to every creature. All was ready when our Lord, having offered up himself for the sins of the world, having risen from the dead and ascended into heaven and sat down upon the right hand of the Majesty on high, as the Prophet, Priest and King of his Church, a Prince and Saviour, rich in grace and power, had given the promised evidence of his readiness for his whole work in the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost. That "baptism of the Holy Ghost" testified by the gift of tongues and the cloven flames of fire, was the sign from heaven that all things were ready on the side of God; that the atonement was accepted, the ever-living intercession of our

High Priest begun, the new and living way prepared, Christ ready to be made unto all that should come unto God, by him, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption." All was ready. Nothing remained to be done to make the salvation of God most perfect, most applicable to all conditions of men, most free to the unworthiest, most accessible to the neediest and most feeble. The wisdom, the love, the mercy, the holiness, the riches of the grace of God, had finished the preparation. All that was now to be done was for sinners to come and take of the feast and live forever. Then began the servants of the King, the Apostles of Christ, to preach the Gospel to all nations, to publish on every side, a full and free salvation, "without money and without price," to all believers in Jesus, saying to all the needy and perishing: "Come —come to Jesus. He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Continually has that call been repeated since the Apostles finished their course. How often have you all heard that sound? How repeatedly, how urgently, how importunately, have you all been entreated, by the messengers of God, to come and partake in what his grace has made ready in Christ!

This brings us to the last words of our text and those on which we shall now chiefly speak: "*And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse.*" Such was their answer to the King's invitation to the marriage festival of his son. In the parable as given by St. Matthew, it is said, "*they would not come.*"* This is certainly the honest aspect of the case. It was not because of any impediments or difficulties that they came not, but simply that they were

* Matt. xxii. 3.

unwilling—their hearts were not right. But in St. Luke that unwillingness is politely disguised by those who would not, under an exterior intended to be considered as respectful to the King whose honors and riches were refused. They made excuse: "*I pray thee have me excused.*" In St. Matthew, we read that "*the remnant,*" that is, we must understand, a certain part of those who were bidden, and who were unwilling, but not respectful enough even to attempt an excuse, or wise enough to desire one, proceeded to such lengths that they took the servants of the King and "*entreated them spitefully and slew them.*" Their aversion, singular as it was, to becoming the guests of the King, on an occasion so distinguished, was too strong to be veiled. It sought no concealment; but at once declared its real spirit, its decided enmity, in the persecution and death of those who brought the invitation.

Such precisely is the state of things under the publication of that message of mercy and grace with which the ministry of the gospel is charged. Which of the first heralds was not spitefully entreated by those to whom they went in the name of the Great King? Hardly had they opened their message before Stephen was stoned to death, and James, the brother of John, was slain with the sword, and Peter was shut up in prison, to be delivered to the rage of the people. The world has been ever since essentially the same in its spirit towards the Gospel. Some are so offended at it, so kindled into positive persecution by the urgency of its love and the terms of repentance and holiness on which its salvation is offered, that they cannot patiently hear its voice, but treat it as an enemy, casting it from them—and sometimes even in these days,

they lay hands of violence on the messengers, put them in loathsome dungeons and to a cruel death; while there is often a spirit manifested by some, of such bitter hatred and opposition, that it requires no special sagacity to see that, so far as the ready mind is concerned, there are not wanting even in this our land, the materials and the agents by which the fires of deadly persecution might be speedily kindled and the messengers of grace would be spitefully entreated and killed.

. But many of those to whom the Gospel message comes, are represented as *making excuse.* They have no idea of *rejecting* it. They suppose they commit no such grievous sin. They desire to be considered as treating it with great respect. They think it a great mercy that such salvation has been provided. That the Gospel is not only true, but most important, and necessary; that death cannot be met in peace without its hopes, they freely own. That, sometime before they shall be called to face that great terror of the sinner, they will have put on that only armor, they earnestly hope. Nothing would fill them with more dismay, than to be assured that their day of grace will have expired before they will have embraced the Gospel. Every anticipation of death-bed thoughts and anxieties is associated in their minds with expectations of repenting, and praying, and endeavoring at last to become partakers of Christ.

But the invitation and calling of God is, "*Come, for all things are ready.*" It means, come *now*, because all things are ready *now*. But there lies the difficulty—"Come by and by; all things will be ready just when it shall suit your convenience to come"—*that* would be the acceptable message to them. But God's set time is *now*. *To-day* is

the day of salvation. As soon as God is ready to receive sinners, is the time for sinners to go to him. But alas! his time is not theirs. All things on their part are not ready. They are not ready for God, however he may be ready for them. The world also has its invitation abroad, and proclaims its feast, and calls the many, and blazons its attractions, and they cannot excuse themselves there. They think they will avail themselves of both—but of each according to their own convenience. The world's festival first, and for that their days of vigor and health, their prime of life, when they can best enjoy and best make return. Then, the invitation of God, when infirmity comes on, and life is getting weary, and death is near. So that when the message of the great God and King is heard, saying, "Come, I have prepared my feast of grace; the lamb for the burnt-offering has been slain; the free and perfect salvation, purchased by the sacrifice of my beloved Son is ready; come ye! come ye! for why will ye die?" their answer to the messenger, in the secret language of the heart is, "*I pray thee have me excused.* My convenient season for such things has not yet come. Let the feast be kept. Let the table wait. God will surely be patient with me. He 'desireth not the death of a sinner.' I expect some day to come. I have no thought of dying without the consolations of religion; but not *now.* God will surely excuse me in this deliberate preference of my own will to his!"

Meanwhile, you do not see these persons keeping away from the constant repetition and urging of that same invitation. They attend where it is preached. They perhaps approve of no ministry that does not exhibit it continually.

All this while, it enters not into their thoughts that in the sight of God they are guilty of so great a sin, every moment, as an actual rejection of his grace and denial of Christ. On the contrary, they draw a broad line of separation, and that too, entirely in their own favor, between the case of those who will have nothing to do with the Gospel and expect never to care for it, because they deny its truth; and their own case, who, not only believing its truth and preciousness, but knowing they cannot be saved without it, so abuse their light, and dishonor their convictions, and practically deny what they know, as to excuse themselves from all present participation in its duties and promises.

We come now to the sort of excuses usually made. In the parable they are classified. Our Lord has there presented three forms of them, as examples under which all may be arranged. One man is represented as answering the servant of the King: "*I have bought a piece of ground and I must needs go and see it.*" Another, "*I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them.*" Another, "*I have married a wife and therefore I cannot come.*" Each says, "I pray thee have me excused." And each seems to think he has given a sufficient reason and has treated the royal condescension and kindness quite respectfully. Now you perceive, that, while these excuses are very different in form, they are in substance alike. They indicate persons of different classes, but agreeing in one main feature of character. They are all drawn from things foreign to the feast. The men have something to do at home and therefore they cannot go abroad; or they have something that interests them so much at home that they

have no wish to go abroad, though it were even to such a festival. They profess no objection to what they are called to enjoy. It is no doubt very good, and they are no doubt, very much favored in being called to it; but they have matters of their own to see to, which they are not willing to lay aside. Now what does this suggest in regard to the excuses usually made, in men's hearts, for not embracing the Gospel? They are not founded on any professed objections arising out of the blessings offered. The Lord is gracious; his grace is unsearchable. Eternal life in his kingdom is worth all worlds. This they deny not. Their excuses are various in form, but they all unite in being drawn from things of this life, from interests of the world. *The love of this present world*, in some of its aspects, is the sum and substance of all; such an immersion of mind and heart in the cares and interests of this life that the mercies of God for another, however professedly reverenced, are not heartily valued; however honored as true, are neglected as comparatively unimportant.

Let us take the illustrations afforded in the parable. One man *has bought his piece of ground, and must needs go and see it.* He represents the man of business, who is prospered, so that he is "adding field to field." The blessing of God is on his labor and toil; and by that very blessing, he is made to feel as if he could do without God. The more prosperous, the more must he be excused for not being religious. The more blessed with things of this life, so much the more is his heart overcharged with them; so much the less room there is for thoughts of God's goodness, and of his own debt of gratitude and love; so much the less he feels the need of those infin-

itely richer blessings to which God calls him in the gospel; and so much the more urgently prays, "*Have me excused.*"

The next illustration is that of a man who has *bought five yoke of oxen and thinks he must needs go to prove them.* He represents the diligent laboring man, pursuing some honest and appropriate vocation, in a lower range of worldly gradation than the former. He is dependent, his family are dependent, on his daily industry. He must be excused attendance at the King's table, because he cannot neglect the supply of his own household; as if to honor the King's grace were not the very way to serve his own necessities. His doctrine is, that men of diligence in business, laboring for the daily bread of their families, must be excused embracing eternal life, excused from seeking the everlasting friendship and favor of God, from whom alone their strength to labor, their ability to reap where they sow, and to enjoy when they reap, is derived; as if to serve God were not the shortest way to serve themselves; and to be allowed so much as to gather up the crumbs that fall from his table, were not a surer way to provide for their households than to gain all the world, and lose his blessing with it.

The condemnation here is not that such persons are so diligent in business, but that their diligence is confined to the least part of their business; that they are laboring for the meat which perisheth, instead of that which endureth unto everlasting life; that they are forgetting eternity in the zeal for a day; neglecting immortal souls, for dying bodies; setting God aside, as if to please him were no part of their proper daily business, imagining that it is possible, in any real sense, to provide for themselves in

this life, while God's will and blessing are neglected. The condemnation is, that they allow the concerns of the field, or the shop, or the counting room, or the office, so to fill their hearts and days, that when God comes to them in behalf of their souls, they have no leisure to hear him, no room to admit him. He must wait till they shall find a more convenient season; and when, after such treatment, he condescends still to plead with them, and to say, "I ask not that you be less diligent in your secular business, but only that, instead of setting your hearts upon it, you give *me* your hearts, that I may give *you* my saving blessing"—alas! the answer that arises, like the cold mist from the ground which God's rain has just watered, is, "Our hearts are too much occupied already; we have no affections at liberty; we are so taken up with things that are seen and are temporal, that we have no time, no heart, for unseen and eternal:" and what is still more strange, they answer thus, as if it were something like a valid and justifying excuse.

There is a third class and condition represented in the parable: that of the man of domestic contentment and blessings, who is so much occupied and satisfied with them that he feels no need of any that are higher, and better, and more enduring. His home is his temple; there he worships; but God is not there. All of home is represented in the parable, in the person of that one being, on whom all its happiness so mainly depends—*the wife.* "*I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*" The case is presented as a type of the manner in which the dearest earthly blessings God ever gives, are made to become our strongest masters, our most ensnaring idols,

to keep our hearts from loving him. A sweet home, such as a good wife, and a faithful mother, and dear children make, many that hear the Gospel have received of God; and this precious blessing keeps their hearts from God; this, when they are called to seek a better heritage, an everlasting, holy home, where they and theirs may all be at rest and full of joy, when all earthly things shall have passed away; where they may see God, face to face, in the endless festival of a Saviour's love, oh! then, it is this very home on earth that holds them fast, and keeps them away. They are too well satisfied with their present rest, to set their hearts on that which "remaineth for the people of God." Let us pause a moment over such a case: The domestic man, to whom no attractions on earth are comparable with those of his own fireside; who, instead of seeking enjoyment anywhere else in preference, returns from wherever else his duty may take him, to rest, and soothe, and comfort, and satisfy his heart at home; who comes from his daily work and meets the welcome of his wife, and the fond embraces of his children, and delights his heart among them, and feels how theirs beat, pulse by pulse, with his, and knows that his cup runneth over—we tremble for that man, that sweet home, that whole domestic circle, when we see in him who heads it and should lead it all to God, a heart so satisfied therein that God is forgotten, and from that temple of his own making and blessing is excluded; that he who gave those blessings that they might win that parent's heart is not sought, because he is not wanted. Not wanted! Yes, they feel no need of him. They are "rich and in need of nothing." Oh! it is fearful to look into a household of so many

blessings and see that what really prevents the father and mother from feeling any need of God's grace, is the very fullness with which his providence has enriched them; that what he sent as winning arguments to persuade them to give him their hearts, are turned into the very chains that bind their hearts away from him. Will God allow this? Will his compassion for that family permit it to go on unwarned, unvisited? Will he not come down in mercy, but in chastisement, and take away one idol and another, till this setting up of their idols in their hearts shall cease, and they will feel their need of him, and turn unto him as their only sufficient rest? O, remember those words: "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God." Give him not such reason to hang your house in mourning! How often, in mercy to men's souls, does God visit them for these things, sending sorrow throughout their household, turning their cup of blessing to bitterness, and causing their very rest to become their weariness, in order to make them know how poor, how empty, how desolate is every thing, where God is not their portion, and rest, and refuge.

And now, having looked at the three classes of those who are represented as making excuse, it occurs to us as something exceedingly remarkable, that sinners, soon to die, soon to stand before God in judgment, should, in the least, desire to be excused from embracing his salvation—wonderful beyond degree! What! the naked excusing themselves from being clothed? the lepers from being cleansed? the hungry from being fed? the condemned from being pardoned? the perishing from being saved? Yes, as if God were to be the only gainer; as if you were called to make a great sacrifice and endure a great trial, to

come to God and receive his peace, and obtain a blessed home in his kingdom, and have the sting of death and the terrors of the judgment day all removed! How can it be accounted for? When you read in the parable, that in answer to the King's invitation to his great feast, they that were called, "all began with one accord, to make excuse;" and when one pleads one pretext, and the next some other pretext, all perfectly futile, you feel that there is something very extraordinary in the matter, something which the reasons given do not explain. Who ever heard of the subjects of a gracious Prince earnestly praying to be let off from accepting his invitation to his banqueting hall, and to the marriage festival of his son? Who ever heard of their pleading such hindrances as are given in the parable? There is a want of nature in this whole matter. It was never met with in real life. All this is designed. It is intended to make it seem so much the more remarkable, so much the more in need of explanation, that men should treat as they do the invitation of the Gospel, where the King is our God, our Judge, our Creator, our Father; and the feast is life eternal in Christ Jesus; and the called, who make excuse and will not come, are poor, perishing sinners, needing the mercy and grace of God above all things, and certain to be lost forever, except they embrace the very invitation which they refuse.

Think of some naked, starving pauper perishing on the highway! A benevolent prince, as he passes, is arrested by his misery, and bids him arise, and go with him to his sumptuous home, where bread and raiment shall be sure to him all his life. You hear from lips almost ready to

be sealed in death the strange answer: "I pray to be excused. I cannot make the sacrifice." Who would not say, The man has lost his senses; much misery has made him mad?

Enter the cell of a criminal under sentence of death, waiting the summons to the scaffold. The prison-door opens. Is it the messenger of the law come to say, that the time has arrived? No, it is the Lord of the country, his countenance beaming with benevolence. He comes to say, "A ransom is found—thou art redeemed from death. Arise, and let thy chains be loosed, and come forth into peace and life." You expect the prisoner will leap for joy and embrace the knees of him who brings such tidings. But see! he is troubled and silent! Is he deaf? Is he crazed? Has he misunderstood? He is actually troubled by the tidings. He is anxiously searching his mind for an answer by which, without being disrespectful, to put off the man who has intruded upon his dungeon, with such an errand. At length you hear him, "Pray, sir, consider my circumstances. This dungeon is my home. Here, in these bonds, is my rest. I am attached to my prospects and cannot sacrifice them. Plans for the better adorning of my prison are not yet complete; how can I leave them! By and by it will be more convenient. I appreciate your kindness, but pray let me be excused!" Poor wretch, who would not think his prison had made him mad?

Change the scene! A man is under sentence of death at the bar of God. The condemnation of his sins reaches to everlasting woe. He knows not but the next hour he may take up his abode forever in hell. The Lord of life, the Prince of peace, the God of glory, in his wonderful

grace, proclaims, "I have found a ransom—a precious price has bought thee. Everlasting life and bliss await thee. Forsake thy sins; flee unto Jesus, put thy trust in him; follow him—and all is well forever." By his word preached, by his Spirit striving, God reiterates the invitation, entreating, exhorting, not willing that any immortal soul should perish within reach of such blessedness. *The man excuses himself!* In his heart he begs to be permitted to decline! Is there a spectacle on which angels look with such amazement, as that perishing sinner thus turning away from the salvation of God? How his miserable pleas must seem to them in their deep reverence, as they behold at one view the majesty of the great God, the heaven of heavens, the hell of the lost, and that poor, immortal soul at the brink of its bottomless gulf! He has so much to do for this life, that he cannot attend to the life eternal. He has some scheme of worldly business on hand, which he cannot interrupt to think of Christ. He has some pleasures of this world to enjoy, which he cannot sacrifice for salvation, and heaven, and God. The man beseeches God to let him go on; for such is the real language of his heart. He beseeches God not to disturb him in his course. "*I pray thee have me excused.*" He is willing to attend Church; to believe in Christianity; to give his mite when called on for good works—and he expects, some time or other, to give his heart to God, but he is not willing to go any further now. He wishes to be allowed to remain contented with his condition, till it shall be convenient to change. So that to have the light of truth flash straight in his face; to have the warnings of God thundering at his ear; to be convinced of his folly and

sin when he is not ready to renounce them; to be made to see that his house is in flames before he is willing to leave it, would too much trouble him. He therefore earnestly desires that all this may stand aside, till he shall find it convenient to give it audience. But what is all this but the voice of God, the mercy, the pity, the earliest love of God, seeking the salvation of that soul? And what is his strong desire to keep all this at a distance yet, but an earnest beseeching of God to let him alone, and allow him to take his rest in the world, and not trouble him with so much light and conviction, so clear a sight of his sins, so deep a sense of the worth of his soul, so strong an impression of eternity, that he cannot be at ease, unless he repent? Oh! it is an awful prayer that a sinner thus makes, to be let alone in his condemnation, in his bondage, in his nearness to everlasting woe—a prayer which comes often much more sincerely, much more from the heart, than many a better prayer from many a nominal Christian. And a prayer it is that God answers. Men that make it are sometimes taken at their word. They would not that God should bless them now with his Holy Spirit, and he takes his Spirit away, not only for this time, but for all time, and they are left undisturbed indeed, to get all they can in the world, and make the best of a life, and a death, and an eternity, without God.

It is written of the prodigal son, that before he became sensible of his folly and sin, "*he came to himself.*" Then he said, "*I will arise and go to my father.*" Let the man who thus neglects or delays the salvation of his soul, but once *come to himself*—see where he is, what he is, what all is worth in comparison with the peace of God, and he too

will instantly arise and go, and will not tarry till he gets to the feet of his Father, and pours out a full heart of repentance and supplication before him.

And now let us put the question, how can all that we have described be accounted for—this strong and general disposition to be excused from accepting the invitation of God; the folly and emptiness of the excuses given; the ingenuity with which they are perseveringly clothed in new forms as circumstances vary; and the tenacity with which they are held and used for the quieting of conscience under troublesome alarms of the truth, no matter how often exposed in all their vanity. It would seem as if to the people so invited and so excusing themselves, there were something positively odious in God's feast of grace; something exceedingly opposed to the ruling dispositions of their hearts in the Gospel of Jesus. Can this be true? Is there such strong opposition between the sinner's heart and the sinner's God, the will of man and the following of Christ? I pray you, consider. What else offers the least explanation of the phenomenon we have been looking at? Let me beg that they whose manner of receiving the Gospel has been described, would consider where the difficulty does really lie? Is its heart truly expressed in the reasons you commonly give for not seeking after God? You have seen and felt the emptiness of those reasons again and again, but the difficulty was unchanged. Ah! there is a truth here which must be learned, however hard to be admitted. St. Paul goes to the root of the matter: "*The carnal mind is enmity against God.*" The dispositions of the unrenewed mind are averse to his holy will and service. Nothing less humiliating explains the case.

No duty presents such claims, such motives; none meets such general and strong reluctance. No interest is pretended to be comparable with this in importance; none meets such impatience under its importunity, or such desire to be delivered from its counsels. Ah! the heart is not right. The resistance is there. The excuses are but soft pretences. It is not the cares or the pleasures of this life that keep the sinner from the grace of God. The power is not in them. They work by a power in the sinner's heart. His heart is so sinful, so alienated from God, so averse to his holy service, so dead to all the inducements of his grace, so alive to sin and the world, that change of heart, a new heart, to be born again, is the only remedy. Oh! yes—and as soon as that change of heart does take place, by the grace of God, in any worldly minded man, how immediately do all those reasons he was wont to give for not embracing the Gospel, vanish as vapor! How do they then seem as so many strong evidences that the natural heart is "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked!" How plainly does he now see that the one simple cause of all the difficulty hitherto experienced in the efforts of the truth to bring him to God, was the desperate, yet ingeniously masked, resistance of his heart, fighting against God, and continually throwing itself into one cover after another, to conceal its real character. How wonderful then appears the long-suffering of God, in having so long borne with him, while thus rejecting his grace!

And now, let us see how all this appears in the sight of God. In the parable as given by St. Luke, the treatment of the invitation is given as it was expressed by those in-

vited: They made excuse. But in the parable as given by St. Matthew, the treatment is described as it appeared to the Maker of the feast. "*They made light of it*, and went their way, one to his farm, another to his merchandise."

It is not meant that they considered themselves as making light of the King's invitation; nor that they did not intend to excuse themselves as respectfully as possible; but that, however they may have intended to appear, the King interpreted their conduct as nothing less than making light of all the honor and enjoyment to which he had condescended to bid them. Certainly; for who would not think that to esteem the privilege of partaking in the King's festival as less interesting than to go to one's farm or merchandise, is to make light of it indeed?

Such then is the interpretation which the Lord God assigns to all this making of excuse, when he, the King whose laws we have broken, whose condemnation we deserve, instead of sending us away under his endless wrath, invites us to partake in the riches of his saving grace. Under whatever form you decline, whatever reason you give, he considers you as *making light* of his mercy, and compassion, and love. You do not intend to be so understood. You wish, in all your ways, to be very respectful to the Gospel, and to be considered as having a very high regard for what it offers. Even in the manner of declining its invitation you suppose you are rendering it a respectful tribute; for instead of denying its claims, you confess them, and the infinite importance of its consolations, and you express the hope that you will one day accept them; only you are not ready yet; you set them aside for the present.

Be not deceived! God sees beneath all that veil, however it may blind your eyes. In his view, *you make light* of all that he has done for you and all that he offers you in Christ. Is it not true? How can you make light of any thing, but by so treating it, as to show that you lightly estimate it, that you account it as of little value. I speak of that estimate which the life, not the creed, or the sentiment, or the confession of the lips, expresses.

Well, then, here is a salvation which cost the deep humiliation, the awful agonies and death of God's beloved Son. Angels desire to look into it as the greatest wonder of love and grace. God, by his word and ministry, sets it before you, and entreats you to make it your own. Now, suppose Satan, in endeavoring to persuade you to neglect it, should offer the whole world as his price wherewith to persuade you, and that considering the immensity of the bribe, you should consent. Surely you would make light of the grace of God; "for what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" What an indignity to the grace of God, to think this world a recompense for the neglect of his salvation!

But far more inexcusable is your case. It is no such vast consideration to which you have yielded. You have weighed the peace of God against a matter of ordinary worldly business, or pleasure, or personal gratification, or palpable sinfulness. You have allowed *such* things, practically to outweigh the precious things of the Gospel, the dying love of Christ, the mercies of God, the glory of his kingdom! Thus have you grievously dishonored his great salvation. In your practical estimate, you have weighed in the balance, the emptiness of a short and

worldly life on earth, spent in constant peril of hell, against eternal blessedness in the peace and presence of God; and the latter you have decided to be the least precious, the least entitled to your heart's devotion. You have acted, year after year, on that estimate, and in so doing, have incurred the more guilt, because it has been directly opposed to the estimate, which in your understanding you were obliged to make, and in your professed opinions, avowed. What if a man should stand on the shore of the ocean, and profess to measure its waters in the hollow of his hand? Would he not make light of it? But have you not offered such indignity to the mercy of God, in Christ Jesus? O, yes! in all the reasons you plead for not coming to him, in all your excuses, you make light of that boundless breadth and depth of grace. What could not be purchased but by the sacrifice of God's only begotten Son on the cross, cannot be thus treated without the most grievous guilt.

"All that a man hath will he give for his life"—property, labor, intense protracted suffering—nothing seems to a man too high a price to pay for his life. We never make light of *that*. How would it sound to hear one say, "I have so much to do that I cannot give any time to save my life. I am so much attached to the world, that I can make no sacrifice of it, to save my life!" Men have a more respectful sense of the worth of this life, which, after all, is but a vapor, than to speak in that way. But when the consideration is life eternal, a question of heaven or hell; when it is the wrath of God that is to be escaped—then almost any sacrifice is too costly; men are busied about this or that worldly matter, and can-

not see to it, and they must be excused; and they are thought quite reasonable. The Spirit of God must wait their convenience. They will be ready by and by to attend to him, when the world can be enjoyed no longer. They will give ear upon a death-bed, when heart and flesh are failing. Yes! those miserable leavings of life they will give to God! And is not this making light of his grace?

But the guilt and wonder of it are the greater, because you profess to believe the scriptures and the infinite importance of what they reveal. That an infidel who despises the gospel as a fable, and makes a mock of hell as a dream, that he should prefer any bauble to a Christian hope, is no marvel; but that they who have no doubt of the dread events of the judgment day, and know that out of Christ is no salvation, should do so—that is the wonder.

But there is nothing to wonder at when we read in the parable, the impressive sequel: "*So that servant came and told his Lord these things.* Then the King, being angry, answered: *I say unto you that none of those men that were bidden, shall taste of my supper.*"

My dear friends, let that declaration alarm you. The invitation may cease, the door may be shut, much sooner than you expect. What if it should turn out with you, as with millions, who lived, and excused themselves, and hoped for better things by and by, just as you are doing, and who are now without hope forever—that before your excuses are ended, your day of grace shall be ended; your opportunity, your privileges, God's forbearance, the precious invitations of the Gospel to you, all ended; and God shall

say: "Their prayer shall be answered—long enough have I called and they refused. I *will* excuse them. Never shall they come. Never shall they hear another call. The seal is set on their condition forever." Then you die. I go to your funeral—a sad funeral, indeed—standing beside your coffin, and looking upon your sealed lips and eyes, and thinking of the end of all things that has come upon your immortal soul, I say to myself, where is he now? how seems to him now the worth of salvation, the preciousness of a hope in Christ? how looks this world to him now since eternity has begun? how seem now the excuses he was wont to give for not embracing the invitation of the Gospel? Alas! what light that outer darkness has thrown on all things! what delusions it has unmasked! what realities it has revealed! Oh! that lost soul, what would it now give to hear again that invitation, "Come, for all things are ready!" and what anguish will it add to his eternal woe, to think how continually that call was once heard and pressed on his acceptance, and how light he made of it, till the opportunity was passed. Oh! he will not make light of the grace of God in that outer darkness, when he shall see them coming from the east and west, from the north and south—the least privileged, the men of the fewest opportunities; and he himself cast out. Oh! may we never know the thoughts of a lost soul, looking back upon its day of grace and its treatment of the invitation of the grace of God in Jesus Christ!

SERMON VIII.

THE CALL TO DILIGENCE.

ROMANS xiii. 12.

The night is far spent; the day is at hand.

THE whole duration of our existence, here and hereafter, is, in these words, divided into two parts—*night* and *day*—a single night, a single day. The night begins at birth, the day begins at death. To those who are this side of the grave, it is night; to those who are beyond the grave, it is day. They who died in the Lord, have now the day of endless glory; they who died in their sins, have also their endless day; but as the scriptures speak of it, it is "the day of wrath, and of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."*

You will observe that the relative position of night and day, in regard to the life of man, is not the same in the text as in certain other passages of scripture. Sometimes the comparison is between our present life and our approaching death; between the life that now is, as the only time to work out our salvation, and death, as the final termination of all opportunity of preparing to meet our God; and then the present life is our *day*, and death is represented as a coming *night*. Of this sort is the comparison in those words of our Lord, "I must work

* Romans ii. 5.

the works of Him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work."*

But here the comparison is not between life and death, but between two divisions of life—the life that we have now, before we die, and the life we shall have when we die. Hence, the present is the night, the future the day. "The night is far spent; the day is at hand." To some here, it is very near the break of day.

I. I will show in what sense our present life is justly called *the night.*

1st. *It is our time of ignorance.* At the very best of our condition this side the grave, we walk in ignorance in respect to matters in the works and ways of God, so innumerable, so immeasurable, that our light elsewhere is but as the spark of the fire-fly upon the bosom of the night. But mistake me not; I do not mean that we have not a clear, and most precious, and sufficient *revelation* of the truth and will of God, in regard to all things which it was the purpose of God to reveal, as necessary to our doing his will, and attaining our salvation. There is light enough in the Bible, when received by a lowly and prayerful mind, and when pursued with ready obedience, to teach all we have need, for present duties and interests, to know concerning God and ourselves; His will, and our duty; His salvation, through Christ, and our way by which to obtain it; light enough about the way of life, and the passage of death, and the awards and the heritage of eternity, and the love and wrath of God, to guide, to stimulate, to comfort us, if we will "run with patience the race that is set before us." But still, even there,

* John ix. 4.

where the precious revelation of the word of God is most direct and full, and where the meek and lowly mind is conscious that it *needs* no more, it is revelation directed only here and there, touching only certain points, and eminences, and headlands. It is but reflected and partial light—the moon, not the sun; the light of *night*, in which we can see enough to shape our course and be comforted; not the broad, penetrating daylight, scattering the mists, illuminating the valleys, filling the forests, revealing all things.

Surely, when you think of the works of God immediately around us, and of what the wisest know of them, you will feel that now is *the night.*

Who but the most learned in the various departments of what science calls *the works of nature*, but religion calls *the works of God*, can have a just impression of how little we are capable of knowing there? We speak, indeed, and justly, of great advances beyond the knowledge of preceding ages, in that field; wonderful discoveries, astonishing results of vast researches. But let us remember, these are all *comparative.* They are vast and wonderful compared with what was known before; but, compared with what we must know remains unknown, and impossible to be known in the present life—compared with vast regions of knowledge in the works of God, all around, and all above, and within the circle of our constant view, but into which the researches of man have never penetrated, and in this life cannot penetrate one single step—what is all human attainment here, but the laborious climbing up of now and then an eminence, only to see a boundless expanse, where foot of man hath never trod?

Our lamp is better, and shines further and brighter, than that of previous centuries. It has greatly extended our illuminated circle. But after all, it is *a lamp*—not the sun; the night is relieved, not broken. It is a very little way that we can go without being lost in the unmitigated darkness. We discover planets before unknown; we resolve the nebulous spots in the sky into many distinct stars and immense worlds; we calculate the prodigous orbits and predict the distant returns of the comets; we measure the velocity of light, and the bulk and weight of worlds apparently on the outskirts of the universe; but what remains? Is there an atom of the dust of our own earth—is there a spark in the light of our own sun—is there a leaf on the trees of our own forests—is there a sensation in our own personal consciousness—is there a mote in the sunbeam, that is not yet to our understanding an impenetrable mystery?

But, my brethren, from the universe of the works of God, turn your thoughts to the universe of his Providence; its boundless embrace, its unfathomable designs, its innumerable parts, their wonderful minuteness, their wonderful greatness! Think how far our light extends over that world, and you must feel that it is now *the night.*

Every least event, the falling of a leaf, the passing of a shadow, the movement of a thought, the death of an insect, is connected, in the counsels of God, as really as the downfall of an empire, with one grand, holy, infinitely good and wise design, which, from the beginning, he has been carrying on toward the final consummation, as steadily and surely as the sun ascends the skies; involving infinite complexity of detail; presenting to our feeble

vision inextricable confusion and contradiction; but going on in the continual progress of its vast orbit, with such harmony and perfectness in the sight of God, that all will be finally completed precisely where, and when, and how, his will at first designed.

But what a world of darkness is all that movement to us, except as we see a little of its surface! How much of it can we trace? How far can our sounding-line descend into its depths? How many of its winding labyrinths are we able to follow? Is there a single course on that chart that our eye can pursue? Is there a single action of our own, or of any creature, the bearing of which on that movement we can see, or in any degree appreciate, knowing, as we do, all the while, that every action of every creature is part and parcel of that wondrous system?

A few things of God's providence we do know, but only because he has told us. We know that in the moving on of his great purposes, he is present everywhere, and to us all; that his will controls, combines, subordinates all events to his final design; that to each of us there is that freeness which makes us morally accountable for what we do, or leave undone; that all things shall work together for eternal good to them that love God; that the ultimate accomplishment of the perfect redemption and blessedness of the whole blessed communion of those who believe in his Son Jesus Christ, is the one end to which the whole movement is directed; and that all will issue at last in most wonderfully displaying and glorifying the infinite riches of the wisdom, and goodness, and grace of God to a sinful world. More than this, as to the providence of our Heavenly Father, we know not—more, we have no need, in

this life, to know. It is our Father's hand that is guiding all; and what need his children to inquire any further? "His way is in the sea, and his path in the mighty waters, and his footsteps are not known." We cannot follow them; but we can trust and not be afraid. We may take the lamp of his word, and go forward in our daily obedience, feeling that the path of life and salvation, and so of happiness, here, as well as hereafter, is plain; but still *it is night.*

And now, from considering your knowledge of things present and temporal, proceed to consider what we know of the things *future* and *eternal*—the world beyond the grave.

"Now, I know *in part*," said St. Paul, speaking of that world; and in comparison with him who had been "caught up to the third heaven,"* what can *we* know? We have the words of another apostle who was favored with wonderful manifestations of the spiritual world. "We know not what we shall be, (said St. John,) but this we know, that when he (Christ) shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."† Oh, yes! blessed be God, we do know this one glorious truth. When our Lord and Saviour shall appear in his second coming to receive his people to his glory, we, if belonging to that company, shall see him as he is, and be like him as he is; and that knowledge of the future blessedness of his people is enough for every purpose of duty, of encouragement, and of consolation. But beyond what is contained in that one great truth of perfect likeness and communion between Christ and his people, in the presence of his eternal glory,

*2 Cor. xii. 2. †1 John iii. 2.

what know we of the life and relations of the redeemed during their endless being, in the world to come? What of that elder family of blessed ones, those hosts of God, the angels about his throne, who we know have much to do with us here, and will have more hereafter? What know we of those "principalities and powers in heavenly places," whose everlasting blessedness is to be so like, and so mingled with, our own? What know we of what is continually taking place among us—an immortal soul becoming *disembodied*, leaving its bodily tabernacle, going forth as it never was before, and *where* it never was before—its mode of existence, of communication, of action—what do we know? Yea, what of the employments, and residence, and relations, and faculties of immortal souls, after the resurrection, when their bodies, made incorruptible, shall be again inhabited, and the inhabitants divested of all infirmities; superior to all that we know of the laws of matter, and space, and time; admitted to the interior of mysteries, of which we know not even the existence; at home in all the boundless domain of light; seeing nothing, as we are compelled to see all things, *in the mere outside qualities* seeing all things as we see nothing, *in the inward nature?* And concerning the soul that hath no peace with God, but is driven away from his presence into the "outer darkness," what know we, what adequate conception have we, of the awful despair of that soul, when with all its enlarged powers of life, of thought, of ability to realize what it is to be lost forever, to have eternity sealed upon his ruin, he knows that his day of salvation is over, the day of his judgment begun. God has cast him out, his

condition is everlasting? Oh! who knows how eternity seems to that lost soul?

But think of a ransomed soul, coming, in the resurrection day, to the full possession of its heavenly inheritance; think of him as safe forever, in the peace, and love, and immediate presence of "God and the Lamb," bathing in that fullness of joy, with faculties immensely invigorated and enlarged, and, for aught we know, *multiplied in number*; think of him in the bosom of that glorious communion of infinite love, and holiness, and knowledge, God and the Saviour, and the whole vast assembly of his ransomed people, their communion, one with another, without an interposing veil, spirit to spirit, being to being, never a wave of trouble in that deep sea of blessedness—Oh! what know we now of heaven! what a time of ignorance is this! Surely it is *the night.*

2d. But we must give you another reason why the present division of our existence is justly called *the night.* With a large proportion of the human family, it is a *period of sleep.* "They that sleep, sleep in the night." Men are asleep in regard to their eternal interests, dozing away the time given them to make their peace with God and secure a heritage in Christ; fast locked in a deadly sleep, so that while the interests at stake are infinite, and the time is fast hastening away, and the warnings are loud around them, and the earth is quaking under the steps of the coming judgment, and a voice from heaven is heard continually crying, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life," they sleep on as unmoved and unconcerned as ever.

Insensibility is a marked feature of sleep. Lift up the

eye-lid of the sleeper and he does not see. The sleep-walker, with his eyes open, paces the fearful edge of the precipice, but sees not. The heavens are pealing with thunder, but he hears not. A boat is seen rushing down the rapids of Niagara, drawing fearfully near the tremendous cataract; every one that sees is frantic with anxiety for the man that is in it; but that man is perfectly at ease, he knows nothing of the peril, *he is asleep*. A fellow creature is to be executed for capital crime, at break of day, to-morrow. The scaffold is ready. You go into his dungeon to help him get ready to meet the judgment of God. You can hardly overcome your emotions. But the prisoner has none. He is utterly insensible to the awfulness of his condition. He imagines himself at liberty, and his thoughts are busied with sanguine schemes for the present world. He is *asleep*. I know not a truer picture of the spiritual slumber in which impenitent men are drowned, in regard to their actual state before God, and the great work of life which demands their instant effort. Oh! what is condemnation at a bar whose extremest penalty can only kill the body, to the condemnation of God, which forever destroys both soul and body in hell? And what sleep is so strange, what insensibility so fearful as his, who, under that condemnation for his sins, knowing there is a Saviour to take it away, and but a short and most uncertain time to secure an interest in that Saviour's grace, is doing nothing for it, feeling no concern about it; taken up with dreams about this short life, as if it were to abide forever! Nothing seems sufficient to arouse him to the business of his soul. The warnings of the word are in vain. The afflictions of Providence shake

him in vain. Soon it will be too late to be concerned, and to pray, and strive; but he is sleeping on. Sometimes, indeed, there is a partial opening of the eyes. Some sense of the reality, and of what ought to be done, gains an entrance. The man is half awake, and begins to look around upon time and eternity, sin and God, heaven and hell; and he begins to move a little about the work to be done. But the world is at hand with its opiate, and the strength of long established habits of impenitence, and of the neglect of God, is at hand with its bonds; and he falls back as insensible and unconcerned as ever, till in his sad history that whole awful declaration of God is fulfilled: "Because I called and ye refused, . . . ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction as a whirlwind. *Then shall they call upon me,* but I will not answer."* Yes, *then;* for when "destruction cometh from God, as a whirlwind," upon the impenitent soul, sleep can endure no more; no prayerless soul can then help calling upon God. "Then *shall* they call upon me," saith the Almighty—they shall beg a hiding place from that tempest. Yes, then they will pray who never prayed before. But the time to be heard is over. That time *was* once. It was dreamed away. It is now gone forever. "*They shall call upon me, but I will not answer.*"

But a state of *dreaming* is also characteristic of sleep. The sleeper, starving with hunger, dreams he is seated at a plentiful feast. The sleeper buried in a prison, and clothed in chains, *dreams;* and at once the sad reality is

* Prov. i. 24, etc.

exchanged, in his imagination, for all the sweets of his home, and the enjoyments of liberty. And what else is the actual state of those who, with such complacent confidence in their condition, are living for this world, unconcerned about God and his peace? Do they see any thing—*any thing*, as it is, in its real character, its actual relations, its just proportions, in its proper value? Are not all things that engage their interests, but as a procession of actors upon the stage, that "walketh in a vain show," indebted to tinsel, and drapery, and imagination, for all it looks like, and only waiting the drop of the curtain to break up and vanish "as a dream when one awaketh?" Are they spending their strength in efforts that tell upon the great business of life, the great concern of man; or only upon schemes of happiness, which the first waking moment, the first dawn of the eternal day, will put to shame as a most wretched delusion? What is every thought of the possibility that man, an immortal soul, made for communion with God, can ever be happy or satisfied, even in this life, without God, without his peace, his love, his blessing—what is it, but the veriest and vainest dream the mind of man is capable of? And what else is the idea so much indulged, that there is so much time in life to serve God, that one may safely delay the work of salvation to a more convenient season? Has it never seemed to you, in sleep, that you were engaged in something that was occupying a very long time, a whole day of effort, full of a whole history of cares, and trials, and doings, which in reality was the dream of a moment? And what else will seem your imagination of the length of the present life, as furnishing abundance

of time to serve the world, and then to serve God, when death shall unbar the windows of the day, and you shall find the night is gone, eternity begun? A dream! a dream! but, alas, a dream which must be remembered with anguish to all eternity.

I am aware that dreams seldom seem dreams while they are passing. They seem honest realities. So seem, as long as they last, the delusions of this world, that hold the spiritual sleeper. It is the awakening that will convince him what they are, and where the reality is found.

Sometimes, in a dream, there is an undefined idea that we are only dreaming. And it is not unfrequently the case with those who try to content themselves with earthly things for their portion, and to feel that they are about their work, and seeking their appropriate ends, that they feel an uncomfortable sense that it is all a mistake; that they are only sowing to the wind, to reap the whirlwind; that nothing has any reality of peace, but the peace of God, that nothing is worth their hearts but his service. But on they go, till that half consciousness of the truth sleeps also, and so they die, and find how true was that half heard voice within them, and how sorrowful it was that they did not hear it more reverently.

II. It remains for the second division of our discourse, that we speak of the future life, as called in our text "*the day.*" But to show in what sense it is so called, is rendered unnecessary by what we have said of the present life as the *night.* By contrast, you can easily understand the appropriateness of the wording of the text. But let us try to form some conception of the change from the present night to that coming day. To help your conception, think

of the change from a man asleep to the same man when he awakes from sleep! Such is the marvellous change that were it not for our daily sight and experience of it, we could hardly believe it to be the same identical man. Such new views and feelings, such enlargement and exaltation in all his consciousness, in the operation of all his senses, in every faculty of body and mind! It is an infant suddenly sprung up to manhood. It is a captive suddenly unchained and brought out of darkness into open day. The man is new to himself. He is in a new world. Well, then, apply this to the aid of your thoughts in conceiving of the change when we shall awake out of the present night time, into the new vigor, and activity, and faculty, the new consciousness, the expanded being, of the eternal day.

Again, consider the vast change that takes place with each of us, every morning, as the rising of the dawn exchanges the uncertain and contracted views of the night for the expanded revelation of the day. Suppose you had never seen the face of creation but at night, with the moon and stars, and the aid of your lamp—what would you know of it? A little just around you, the rest all a black expanse, nothing seen but undefined extension. And suppose you should then suddenly find yourself in the open day; all the varied scenery of nature, all the beautiful coloring of the flower, of the forest, and the sky, all the minute and the grand which every day reveals to our familiar view, suddenly exhibited. It would be a feeble illustration of the vast change that must take place when a soul exchanges this present star-light night of life, aided as it is by the lamp of the word of God, for the full

disclosures of the everlasting day. Then will there be the awaking of the soul to a vigor of capacity to enjoy or to suffer, which it never knew before. Then will there be *light;* light penetrating, surrounding, exhibiting every thing as it is. Oh! then must every false hope be seen as it is, with all counterfeit piety, and every thing under the name of religion, till nothing remains unconfounded with the light, but the simple giving of the heart to God and the simple resting of the sinner in Christ. Then will be seen the true value of the peace of God and the full preciousness of the love of Christ to sinners; the wisdom of those who took refuge there, and the guilt of those who neglected so great salvation. It will be "*the day,*" indeed, "*of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God,*" through everlasting ages. A day which will behold only two communities out of the whole race of man; but those, alas! how widely separated in character and destiny. To one it will be "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God," *in his holiness and justice,* fulfilling his word to the impenitent and disobedient, making retribution for their ingratitude, and rebellion, and neglect of the Gospel of Christ; while to the other also it will be the "revelation of the righteous judgment of God," in his boundless grace to all who embraced the salvation of Christ, making good to them all his promises, investing them with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

It is written concerning that day, "*there shall be no night there.*"* No night to the blessedness of the redeemed, because their vision of God will never be clouded; the brightness of their eternal prospect will never be darken-

* Rev. xxii. 5.

ed; sorrow can never come; perfect bliss never cease. But it is not to that community only that there will be no night. There will be none to the lost, because there will be *no sleep* there, no rest arising out of a brief unconsciousness of the awful reality of their destiny, no darkness upon their prospect, not even a momentary dream, however delusive, of something better. It will be a perpetual, unchanging "*day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*" Oh! it would be something there to be allowed some blindness for a moment to the whole reality, some dream, some mode of getting the mind away from the perpetual thought of the everlasting future of a lost soul. No, there is "*no night there.*"

III. I have but little time to dwell upon that portion of our text which must conclude our discourse—the declaration that "the night *is far spent*, the day *is at hand.*" It is true in regard to those who have spent a large part of the average life of man. It is applicable to those who, whether young or old, vigorous or infirm, are, in the appointment of God, soon to die, and among them may be the least expecting and the least prepared in this assembly; it is true in regard to us all, my brethren, because of the preciousness of every year and day when such interests are at stake, and such uncertainty hangs over even the morrow. Oh! yes, the day is at hand, because the longest life of man is nothing in the presence of that eternity.

And how stands your condition and work, my hearers, with reference to that day? Have you been, to this moment, sleeping away your season of grace? Has the far-spent night been consumed in neglecting God, in denying your hearts to Christ, in serving a world that has no wages

to pay you but disappointment and sorrow? Is the great day at hand, and have you made no preparation? Is the whole work of your salvation undone, all put off to some indefinite period, as if any uncertainty were good enough for such an interest? And will you still say with the sluggard, "a little more sleep, a little more slumber," instead of being up and about your great work, striving to redeem the time and get ready for that day? Is it not high time, ye dying men, to awake out of sleep? high time to cease hardening your hearts against the grace of God, and increasing your alienation and your guilt? Is it not high time you were beginning a life of earnest prayer, of humble repentance, of diligent watchfulness, "lest that day come upon you unawares" and find you without hope in Christ?

Are there any who feel that *it is high time*, and whose consciences are struggling to be free and to be permitted to seek God and salvation? I beseech them give ear to that awakened conscience. Do not grieve the Spirit of God, whose voice it is, and whose rebuke it speaks. "The time is short." The redeeming grace of the Lord Jesus Christ still invites you.

Ye who hope you are Christians in more than name, are you indeed awake? Do you know yourselves? Do you realize the solemnity of your obligations to God? Are your eyes well open to the leading of the Master whose name you bear? Do you see the blessedness you are seeking — the awfulness of the misery you should be escaping? Does the reality of eternal things, of the all-seeing eye of God, and of the love and promises of Christ, bear supremely upon your hearts and control your lives? Is your

standing with God well ascertained? Are all dreamy hopes and baseless consolations renounced? Is it only by "comfort of *the scriptures*" that you have hope of salvation? Do you habitually reduce all questions of duty, all marks of a Christian, all your expectations of God's favor to that test—the scriptures? Are you living "as children of the light and of the day," lamp in hand and trimmed, waiting the coming of your Lord?

Was not that a tender, but most piercing rebuke of Jesus to his disciples, when they slept in Gethsemane, while he was prostrate in prayer, and full of agony? At first when he came to them and found them asleep, he only said, "Could ye not watch with me one hour,"* *only one hour?* A second time he came from his own place of agony and prayer, and found them "asleep again."* Then he looked on them in silence, and went away again to his solitary conflict and agony. A third time he came, and Judas and his band were coming to take him; the time to watch and pray was over. Then he said, "Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going." As if he had said: 'Now slumber if you can. When watching and praying would have been of use to prepare you for the coming trial, you could sleep. Now that the danger has come, take your rest; watching and praying are too late. Sleep on now!' And may not the unfaithful disciple of the present day expect a more painful rebuke, when his Lord, instead of the Sufferer in Gethsemane, shall be the Judge of quick and dead? 'Sleep

* Matt. xxvi. 40. * Matt. xxvi. 43. † Ib. 45, 46.

on *now*,' (may not Jesus then say,) 'faithless sleeper, bearing the name of Christian; take your rest now, if you can find it. You need not watch or pray any more. The time is ended. You slept in the day of temptation, when prayer and vigilance would have been your salvation, when my faithful ones were denying themselves and taking up their cross and following me. Your slumbers will be disturbed no more by the calls of duty and of mercy. Behold, they are at hand that will take you away. Sleep on, take your rest, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched!' But to the earnest, wakeful, watching, praying believer in Jesus, how animating is the declaration: "*the night is far spent, the day is at hand;*" the race is far run, the prize is at hand; the battle is far gained, the crown is at hand; the pilgrimage is far traveled, the home and the rest are at hand. "*Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed,*" was the exulting language of one who realized all its joyfulness. Every day, every trial, every sorrow, brings nearer our day of deliverance, shortens the intervening night. How much nearer to many of us, brethren, is that glorious day, than when we first came as believers to Christ! How soon it will be here with death to try our faith, and put us to earnest prayer and exercise of hope for a short space, and then all trial is over and the day begun, and we are safe at home for ever and ever. "Lift up your hearts, then, for your redemption draweth nigh." Press forward, brethren. Keep your eye upon the golden towers of the city of God on high. Walk as children of the day, "fervent in spirit, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." Moderate all earthly concern, soothe every pain, lighten

every burden, assuage all griefs, with the thought of the nearness of the time when you will be with Christ in his glory. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." "I reckon, (said one who was well skilled in such computation,) I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time (said an Apostle who had so many sufferings in his time to count) I reckon that all are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us."* May that estimate be ours, and so that glory ours, through our Lord Jesus Christ! Amen.

* Rom. viii. 18.

SERMON IX.

THE CHRISTIAN NOT OF THE WORLD.

JOHN xvii. 16.

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

How peculiarly interesting and instructive to a devout reader of the scriptures, is the intercessory prayer of our Lord, contained in this chapter, and of which the text is a part. The chapter is altogether composed of that prayer, except a verse or two of introduction. And what is the value and interest of so long a prayer, coming from the lips of our great Intercessor, and especially when we read in it that it was offered, not only for his disciples then living, but for all that should ever believe on him through their word, and therefore for us, if we answer to that description!

The time and circumstances of this prayer give a special impressiveness to whatever lesson of duty it was intended to teach. Jesus had just come, with his disciples, from the upper chamber, where he had substituted for the Paschal feast of the Jews, the Christian feast of the Lord's Supper, to commemorate what in a few hours was to be offered—the sacrifice of himself, as the Lamb of God, in propitiation for the sins of the world. He had now reached the Mount of Olives. In a few moments he was to enter the solitary garden, and to endure that awful

agony of soul, which, ever since, has associated, in Christian minds, such affecting thoughts with the name of Gethsemane. It was night. Our great High Priest being prepared to offer himself, without spot, to God, both in the garden and on the cross, begins that gracious intercession for believers, which now he ever liveth to continue in the presence of the Father Almighty. Having finished his parting words of counsel and consolation to those he was about to leave alone in the world, as sheep in the midst of wolves, "he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come:" the hour of the great trial, the hour of the deep agony, the hour of the powers of darkness, the hour of the great conflict for the deliverance of sinners, the hour of the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Then followed that mediatorial prayer, so earnest, so affectionate, so comprehensive—the prayer that embraced in its arms of love, and bore up to God, all the wants of all disciples of Christ, in all future ages; a prayer which ascended, and was accepted, on the ground of the perfect merits of the offerer; which still lives in heaven before the mercy seat, and is as efficacious for the Church of Christ as when it came first from his lips, and to which it is the privilege of all that come unto God, by faith in Christ, to attach their kindred supplications, that they may mount on its wings, and be heard for its merits.

Brethren, is the intercession of our Lord in heaven, as the "Advocate with the Father for all that come unto God through him," a matter of deep interest to you? Do you feel, sometimes, as if you would like to look "within the veil," and get a view of the High Priest of our profes-

sion, in the discharge of his great office, standing before the mercy-seat, bearing on his heart the wants of all his people, and in virtue of his atoning sacrifice on the cross, making intercession for each of them? Would you like to know what is the burden of his intercession? what besides the forgiveness, and sanctification, and perfect redemption of believers? what in your individual case attracts his attention and furnishes especial subject of mediation? We cannot lift the veil of things unseen, as yet. But as Jesus, on the Mount of Transfiguration, vouchsafed to his disciples, for a moment, a sight of that ineffable glory which he was soon to put on, and in which he is now seen in heaven; so, in this mediatorial prayer, offered in such direct connection with his mediatorial sacrifice, in the hour that so concentrated all the functions of his everlasting priesthood, he has given us the best view we can have in this world, of his intercessory office, "in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High." Study the petitions of that prayer. You will see in it what it was for which your Saviour was especially concerned in your behalf, my Christian brethren, when his love for you was just taking him to suffer and die for your sins. You may thus form a good idea of what concerns him now, in your behalf, as he looks upon you in your present weakness, and exposure, and dangers. And thus may you learn, most impressively, what it is that should occupy your chief concern for yourselves, and should speak with all earnestness, in your own prayers.

In that mediatorial prayer of our Lord, there is a feature on which I desire to collect all your thoughts at present. And that is, how much the mind of our compassion-

ate Saviour was drawn to, and occupied with, the condition of his people, as being "*in the world*;" in it as a place of duty and a place of danger, and yet as being not "*of the world*;" a separate people, mingled but distinct, associated but not *assimilated*, having much in common with the world as to the present life, but yet "a peculiar people," "not conformed to the world." First, he described them as having been given to him by the Father, "*out of the world.*" Then he adverted to the trial to which they were to be exposed, in being, without his visible presence, in the midst of the world's influences. "*Now*, (he said,) *I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee.*" Then he speaks of the opposition they must meet with from the world. "*The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" Then comes the supplication drawn out by that thought of the world's enmity. "*I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.*" Then follows a repetition of the description just before uttered, of the unworldly character of his people, their distinct and separate character while in the world: "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.*" This repetition of that description is remarkable. Why, in the space of three verses, did Jesus twice declare of his people, on that most solemn occasion, in that brief space when the whole burden of their necessities, in all ages, was in his mind, "*They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world*"? It was no vain repetition. Our Lord had meaning in such things. It is, like his "*Verily, verily, I say unto you*," intended to be regarded as very emphatic; and

it ought to draw our serious attention. I read it as connected with the next verse, "*Sanctify them through thy truth.*" The progressive *sanctification* of the disciples of Christ is most intimately connected with the distinct carrying out of their character, as "not of the world." I read it also as connected in the same prayer with the declaration of the Saviour, "*I am glorified in them.*" Christ is glorified in his disciples in proportion as they are faithful to their proper character as "*not of the world.*"

I desire, therefore, in this discourse, to set out in some of its chief features, this character of Christ's people, as "*Not of the world.*"

But in order that our view may be distinct, we must form a distinct idea of *the world* here spoken of. What are its distinctive features?

The human race are in the scriptures distributed into two, and only two, divisions—the *kingdom of God* and the *world*, or the kingdom of "the god of this world," "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." They who walk according to that spirit, are said to walk "*according* to the course of this world," and to be "dead in trespasses and sins;" "fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind."* And our Lord has solemnly declared that none can enter into the kingdom of God, *except they be born again of the Holy Ghost;* † that is, the only way out of the world into the kingdom of God, is the way of a great spiritual transformation, the new birth by his Spirit. "If any man be in Christ, (that is, "not of the world,") he is a new creature." Thus, St. Paul exhorts us to be "*transformed by the renewing of the mind,*" as the only way to be "*not conformed to this world.*"‡

* Eph. ii. 1–3. † John iii. 3–5. ‡ Rom. xii. 2.

Hence it is manifest that in the scriptural view of *the world*, as spoken of in the text, the basis of its distinctive character, is the *natural* or *unregenerate* state of man. The world is not marked off by external peculiarities; it is not a question of less or more in worldly vanities, or worldly devotedness; its boundary line is not made by the pale of the visible Church; we do not ask who are they that have received the sacraments of the Church, and attend punctually upon its services. The true line of the world runs within the visible sanctuary and separates to right and left the partakers of the sacraments. It is simply the question, who are they that have been born again, and have the Spirit of Christ? All who have not been thus transformed, and who are therefore in their natural state of spiritual death, are "walking according to the course of this world," and so are *of the world.*

Now consider what innumerable varieties of moral character this description of the world embraces—from the most profligate sensualist, to the person of pure morals and delicate refinement; from the men of most brutal inclinations and habits, to the elevated tastes of those who find their pleasures in intellectual culture; from the most selfish of mankind, to those whose benevolence is the blessing of their neighborhood; from the most dishonest, to those whose scrupulous uprightness is almost proverbial. Such vast diversities are certainly found among those who make no pretension to having undergone any such spiritual change as that expressed by being "born again" of the Holy Ghost. The question then arises—and an important one it is—Seeing such wide diversities of moral character are thus all classed together as *the world,*

and of course, as all displaying essentially the same predominant features, alike out of the kingdom of God, and therefore excluded from his salvation, what is that predominant likeness, in the midst of so much unlikeness, by which this classification is made?

We answer: it is in *their affections;* they "mind earthly things," as their portion and felicity; their affections are set "on *things on the earth,*" and not "on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," and where they are commanded to be set, and will be set if we "be risen with Christ," and have his Spirit;* or, to use another inspired description, they "*mind,*" they set their hearts on "the things of the flesh," and not "the things of the Spirit."† Such is the distinctive feature of *the world.*

The affections of some who are of the world, are certainly placed on things far higher and purer, more noble and refined than those of others; but we mean that whatever they may be, they are things *on the earth,* temporal, not eternal, not the things of the Spirit of God; not Christ, and his will, and service, and kingdom. It is not asserted that the affections of all are set in that direction with equal devotedness; that all follow "the course of this world" with the same zeal; that none have ever any serious thoughts of religion, or make any efforts to obtain eternal life. Far from it. Many of the most worldly in their affections, are among the most laborious in endeavors, by outward works, which require no change in the current of the affections, to obtain salvation. The Pharisee who prayed in the temple, and was a member of God's visible Church, and fasted twice in the week, and gave the tenth of all he possessed to what he considered

*Col. iii. 1, 2. †Rom. viii. 5.

good works, was *of the world.* We may go further than he in seriousness of mind. Religious truth may exert a daily influence, of no little value upon our feelings and ways. Though not *renewed* in our minds, we may be reached and operated on in our minds, by the word and Spirit. Some may seem so little worldly in their affections, that in comparison with others, they may seem almost spiritually minded. But the question is not, what influences affect us partially, or occasionally, or comparatively, but what have the habitual, the governing control of our hearts; where do we seek our present portion; whence come the motives that conclusively and permanently determine our lives? And the answer, with regard to all who have not been born of the Spirit of God, in all the varieties of their aspects, is, "*they mind earthly things,*" not the things of "*the Spirit of God.*" They cannot say, "The Lord is the portion of my soul." My heart is fixed on God. "I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." I hunger to be "holy, as God is holy."

And thus, having seen the distinctive feature of *the world,* we obtain by contrast the more satisfactory view of the character of the disciple of Christ, as "*not of the world.*"

The basis of his distinctive character is, that he *has been born again.* He is "not in the flesh," but "in the Spirit." By the grace of God, he is "*begotten again* unto a lively hope;" thus he has been given "out of the world," unto Christ, by the Father;* and now he "minds the things of the Spirit." Thus is he "spiritually minded."† His affections are upon "the things of the Spirit"—the will of God and the path of holiness here; the presence of

* John xvii. 6. † Rom. viii. 5.

God and the holiness of his kingdom hereafter. He *can* say, "*the Lord is the portion of my soul.*" The creature is cast down from the throne it had usurped in his heart. The supremacy of the Creator is restored. The great governing motives of his life, are brought from above this world, even from Christ his Lord in heaven. I do not mean that there is never any inconsistency in the state of his mind with this heavenward direction; that earthly things are so entirely cast out, as well as cast down, as not to furnish cause of continual watchfulness and often of deep self-humiliation; that though his heart be habitually on heavenly things, he does not find still that it is a very weak and wayward heart, needing, to keep it where it is, the continual renewing of the same grace that first placed it there. As was said before, in regard to those who are *of the world*, we are looking, not at the partial, or occasional, or secondary influences, but at the habitual, and supreme. The true disciple is not of the world, because his treasure is not; and hence his heart is not. What he loves, he is conformed to.

Take good heed, brethren, to that weighty saying of our Lord: "*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*" It shows the precise level of your spiritual standing. You can neither rise above nor fall below that mark. If our Lord Jesus Christ be not your chosen and precious treasure, then your hearts are as far beneath him, as earth is below the heavens. Whatever your happiness, its fountain head is somewhere here on the earth. The stream cannot rise above its source. Your happiness can never be else than of *the earth*. Your best portion is therefore here. Temporary, turbid, unsatisfactory as all

things earthly must be, they are your all. Alas! what poverty for an immortal soul! Nothing laid up for eternity; and yet eternally you must live!

But on the other hand, if Christ be your treasure, in comparison of whom you "count all things but loss," then your hearts are "where he is, at the right hand of God." The fountain head of your happiness is there in the holy mount. A well of the water of life is within you that is ever "springing up into everlasting life."* You will go where your treasure is. Your "own place" is with Christ, where he is at the right hand of God.

And now, having seen the main classifying feature of those who are *not of the world*, let us attend for a moment to the comparison by which the nature of the difference between them and the world is illustrated in the text. "They are not of the world, (said our Lord,) *even as I am not of the world*"—that is, the disciple of Christ is not of the world just in the *same sense* as He who took our nature and was made man, and dwelt among us, was not. The extent of unworldliness in the two, is to be sure unspeakably different; the *principle* is the same. And thus have we a fundamental principle of all Christian character. The disciple is as his Master. There is a common character and spirit in the head of the mystical body "which is the blessed company of all faithful people," and each of his members. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."† "We have the mind of Christ,"‡ was the declaration of primitive Christians, and we must be essentially of the same mind, or we are not Christians of any degree. Likeness to God was the character of

* John iv. 14. † Phil. ii. 5. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 16.

man as created and unfallen. Likeness to God in Christ is the character of man now fallen, but created anew. It is true religion on earth. It will be heaven forever. It is the family likeness of "the household of God," associating into one holy brotherhood, all disciples of Christ on earth in their exceeding imperfectness, and all saints in heaven in their perfect holiness. The difference between them is great but continually decreasing. Those on the earth are striving to be delivered more and more from remaining worldliness, and to be more conformed to their Master's holiness. What of the world yet besets them is not held by them willingly, but adheres to them unwillingly, as clay on the garments, and mire on the feet of the traveller through a marshy way. Soon their journey will be ended. They will be unclothed of all that remains of the world, and clothed upon with all that remains of heaven. Then will Christ and all his people be one in holiness made perfect, as they are one now by a common Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

As I have thus described the true disciples of Christ as *not of the world*, in respect to the objects on which their affections are supremely set, and the governing motives and spirit of their lives, let me now conduct you to another view. The true followers of Christ are not of the world, but are a peculiar people in it as regards *their consolations amidst the trials of the present life.*

The type of the condition of the Christian as *in* the world, but *not* of it, was the nation of Israel as God's chosen and peculiar people, dwelling alone in the earth, surrounded with the nations, but unassimilated to any of them; first while in Egypt, then in the wilderness, then in Canaan. The ceremonial law, from its elementary be-

ginning before they forsook Egypt to its completion at Sinai, was the wall of separation between them as a visible Church of God's peculiar people, and all other people. That outward separation and distinctness, represented the spiritual separation and peculiarity of all that true Israel, in all ages, "who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and put no confidence in the flesh." * In conformity with that type, St. Peter says to all true believers in Jesus: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." †

But most signally were the people of Israel marked off in Egypt, as well as in the wilderness, by the peculiarity and the inimitable nature of their consolations amidst abounding afflictions. When the plague of darkness came down on all the land of Egypt, so deep and black that "the people saw not one another, neither did any rise from his place for three days;" then it is written, "*all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.*" What light was that? Many of them lived where the Egyptians lived. Then, if it were only some ordinary, natural light, such as of candles or torches, why could not the Egyptians have had the same? No, the Israelites had what was impossible to the Egyptians. All the means of ordinary lighting were made of none effect, by the extraordinary, supernatural darkness. The light in the dwellings of the Israelites was equally supernatural. It was just the same light which afterwards, in the pillar of fire, guided their night march out of Egypt and lighted up their whole camp when they rested. Under the

* Phil. iii. 3. † 1 Pet. ii. 9.

plague of darkness it stood, not as a great column of light, for the families of Israel were scattered among the Egyptians; but it entered, like the present light of Gospel promises, into each of their houses, and cheered and comforted them with the expression of God's favor, while their oppressors were trembling around them under the darkness of his judgment. It was the hand-writing upon their walls, marking them as His peculiar people, and distinctly testifying, that though *in* Egypt, they were not *of* Egypt.

And thus it is, when God sends afflictions on the children of men, which bring such darkness upon all the ways, and pleasures, and hopes of the people of the world, that they are disquieted within them, and go mourning all the day, and know not who will show them any good, but grope about for consolation and find none. Then may ye "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not." "A book of remembrance" is written for them that fear the Lord and think upon his name.* Unto them "shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." There is light in their hearts. "They walk in the light of the Lord." Having peace with God, through faith in Jesus Christ, they are enabled to "glory in tribulations"—"in all things giving thanks"—finding their consolations to abound in God with the increase of their trials. It is written, "*He giveth songs in the night.*" † Songs in the day time are easily given. Such is the rejoicing of the world. Egypt could have that. But *in the night*, in deep tribulation, when all the candles with which the children of this world light their life, have

* Mal. iii. 16, 17, 18. † Job xxxv. 10.

gone out; especially in the night of death; oh, then to have songs of rejoicings in our hearts! Who can give them but God; who but his people can learn them? The magicians of Egypt did great wonders, indeed, in imitation of God's plagues upon Egypt, but to counterfeit his signal-light in the dwellings of his people, they did not attempt. The world, and they who are not of it, are often associated in the same tribulations; but *the songs in the night* with which God visits his people in such times of need, is that "secret of the Lord with them that fear him," with which the world intermeddleth not. "I call to remembrance (said the Psalmist) my song in the night." But the light in the dwellings of Israel in Egypt did not forsake them when they had left Egypt. As soon as their scattered families had gathered into one great host, and had gone out on the march to the promised possession, then the scattered lights of their dwellings were gathered over the vast multitude into a pillar of cloud and of fire—the visible expression of the presence of God among them, to guide, defend, supply and comfort them. "In the day time he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire."*

How distinctly were the Israelites thus separated from all the people of the countries, and marked as God's peculiar people! You know that towards the Israelites, that pillar was *light*, and towards all others, darkness; that in the day time it appeared as a cloud, luminous, but cloudy; but as evening came on, its brightness increased, till, the night being complete, it was all a pillar of fire, illumining the whole host of Israel with a glorious

* Ps. lxxviii. 14.

effulgence, making plain their way, resting as a defence and consolation upon their camp, and saying in a language that could not be mistaken, "*God is here; this is his people.*" What a wondrous sign! How remarkably were the people of Israel separated from all other people, by consolations which it was impossible for others to have! But the true Israel—the living Church of Christ—has a still more blessed light. God still leads his people, whom he hath chosen out of the world, in whose hearts he hath placed his Spirit, and who, in the midst of Egypt, are not of it, having set out in their journey to the heavenly land. He leads them "in the day time with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire." What else is "the glorious Gospel,"—the very light of his countenance, the assurance of his presence, the pledge of the inheritance, the lamp of our path, the strength and joy of our hearts—that glorious manifestation of grace in Christ Jesus? "*A cloud,*" for it is all a mystery of the deep things of God; "*a fire*" of wondrous brightness, for it is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Full of precious promises, it is "joy unspeakable and full of glory" to the believer, while it is all condemnation to the world that heeds it not. "In the day time it is *a cloud*—the day time of prosperity—when the world is in its sunshine, and puts on its brightest and most assuring countenance; when no afflictions darken it, and no trials reveal its emptiness. Then the people of God are wont to feel too little their need of what his grace has prepared for them in the gospel. They see so much light all around in the wilderness, that, false and vain as it is, it dims, to their view, the light of the gos-

pel. The preciousness of the latter is not fully realized. It is a pillar of cloud, not of fire—as the clouds that brighten so gloriously at evening into blazing chariots, are only clouds at noon. But only wait till the sun has set. Let dark night come on—a night of adversity, of sorrow, of deep affliction. Then, when all the candles with which the men of the world seek to light up their tabernacles, only serve to make their darkness the more sensible; when the perfect impotence of all human consolations is most painfully felt; when what was before, to the world, as a fire of light, is now all gloominess and misery—then shines out, in all its glory, the preciousness of the gospel. The darker the world, the brighter the gospel. The more all other lights go out, the brighter that light appears. What was a cloud in the day time, is a pillar of fire in the night time, saying, of all whose hearts it comforts, and whose path it guides, "These are not of the world." It will be with them in all their journey to that world where their home is, and their hearts are, and never will it seem so glorious, so full of the presence and love of God, as when they shall be going through "the valley and shadow of death."

Nothing more detects and exhibits the essential difference, in point of character, of dependence, and of heart, as well as portion, between the world and those who are not of ti, than affliction. Job said, "when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."* When he *was* tried by a hot fire of tribulation, he did come forth as gold indeed. Nothing could so plainly have showed the eminent peculiarity of his character, as of another stamp altogether from those around him.

* Job xxiii. 10.

There is in pure gold an essential peculiarity, which man can neither give nor take away. Mix its dust as you please with the dust of other substances; burnish as you please other substances into its likeness, the fire will detect the counterfeit, and will bring out the gold, untarnished and undiminished. Thus it is with the genuine character and peculiarity of true Christians. "Not *of* the world;" as long as they are this side of the grave, they are *in* the world. Their business is there, their sphere of duty is there. They have so many secular interests, employments, duties and sympathies, in common, in many respects, with the world, that, inasmuch as their distinctive character is in the inward man, it does not always appear to the common observer, or in ordinary circumstances, how truly they are "a peculiar people," mixed with, but not conformed to, the world, having much to do with it, but living above it. Thus, to many, there seems no difference of much moment between the character of the real Christian, and that of many amiable, upright people, who make no claim to that distinction. But the real difference is immense. There is an entire contrast of ruling dispositions, of chosen portion, of habitual reliance, and of actual relation to God.

On one side, the affections are on things on the earth. Thus are they essentially worldly, some more than others, but all, in their ruling dispositions and reliance, *worldly*. Hence, they have nothing better than the world can give. On the other side, the affections are set on things above, in Christ, his will, his glory, his kingdom—in some more earnestly than in others, in some more manifestly than in others, but in all that are Christ's indeed, really and ef-

fectively. Thus is their character formed, and their position determined. The two classes, in the sight of God, are really two widely distinct people, having hearts without sympathy with one another, in their governing influences; having masters as opposite as the world and heaven; consolations as different as things that are seen and are temporal, and the things invisible and eternal, of the kingdom of God. There are times when all this becomes especially manifest—times of affliction, when ordinary supports have failed, and human relief is vain, and the world seems to the sorrowing heart all a desert, and all its cisterns dry. The faithful disciple of Christ is not disappointed then, for he has expected nothing better from the world. His consolation is not taken away, because it never depended on any thing here. He says to the man of the world, journeying with him, "Let not your heart be troubled; God is a very present help. Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, may well be cheerfully borne, when we think of the everlasting rest which remaineth for the people of God. Let the love of Christ be our comfort, as we journey on to his kingdom." But how little his worldly neighbor is able to receive such consolation. It is something he has never learned. It meets no sympathy within him. What cheers the Christian, only the more troubles him. The more the trials press, and the world grows dark, the more in contrast these travelers appear. One of them, as he walks in darkness, is continually saying in spirit, "Who will show me any good;" all is "vanity and vexation of spirit;" there is none to comfort me! The other, cast down, but not destroyed, sorrowful, but rejoicing in God, has meat to eat, his neighbor knows not of. "My soul, wait thou

only upon God, for my expectation is from him. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God."

The two travelers are drawing near to the valley of death. How different their views of that passage. To one it is the end of all his expectations; to the other, it is the entrance upon all the blessedness of his portion. To one, it is leaving forever all he has ever loved; to the other, it is going to all on which his love has ever been supremely placed. Now they are stepping down together. The waters are deep, the darkness is awful; heart and flesh are failing. "Who will help me?" cries the man who has not made God his trust. No voice answers. No kind hand, able to support, is held out to him. He goes down alone, in all that darkness, through all that awful way—all alone. The world has left him. His candle has gone out. The waters get deeper and deeper. Not a ray of light. Oh! how dreadful so to die. To leave all behind; to have nothing to go to in eternity—no refuge in God, no portion in Christ. Where is his neighbor? Is he alone? Hear him! "My soul followeth hard after thee; thy right hand upholdeth me." "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." It is the shadow of death, but its darkness is turned to day. It is a strange path, but his Saviour has trodden it before him, and taken away all its terrors. It will soon open upon his home and rest. Deeper and deeper he descends. Earnestly and peacefully his spirit says, "I will fear no evil, for thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The deep waters now threaten to overwhelm him. A voice whispers, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." He knows his shepherd's voice, and answers, "I

will trust, and not be afraid." His sins assail him; his unworthiness stares him in the face, and would paralyze his hope. He answers, "I know in whom I have believed, and that he is able to save me to the uttermost." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Jordan divides before his people, going to their heavenly Canaan. Its floods overwhelm those who, being not of the true Israel, are *of the world.*

And now, as we are all soon to need all the help and consolation we can get, let each of us ask himself, to which class do I belong? *Of the world or not?* There is no neutral position.

To those who know where they belong, and that the world is their all—allow me a few kind, earnest words. My dear friends, I have endeavored to set before you the real, the essential difference between your spiritual state and that of God's people. You see that it is no incidental thing, but a radical difference of spiritual *being.* Their bread is not your bread. Their chief happiness is not happiness to you. Their chief desires have no place in you. Their God is not your God; your god is not theirs. The difference is appalling. What can remove it on your part? How can you be as they? Do I hear you say, "Suppose we should become more serious and thoughtful, as regards religion; less interested with the idols of the world; more sensible of the emptiness of all earthly things; more secluded and circumspect? And suppose we should be unfailing in attendance on all religious services, private and public, would this translate us into the condition of those who are *not of the world?*" I answer, all this only reaches the outer man. You might shut yourselves up

in a monastery, and by a process of self destruction, become, in a sense, dead to the world; but it does not follow that you would be alive unto God. Bodily sickness, even, may easily make the world, and all in it, seem exceedingly distasteful, but it cannot make us hunger and thirst after God and holiness. What, then, must you do? I go to the foundation. There is but one answer. "*Ye must be born again.*" Nothing will do but a *new heart.* The difference is in moral nature. Nothing but an entire change of moral nature will abolish it. The gradual brightening of a worldly state into a spiritual, is just as impossible as to burnish brass into gold. They want a common base; they can never be one. Your only way is to stop where you are; begin life anew; seek the renewing of the Spirit of God. Go down to the beginning of childhood; arise from thence to be the people of God. Begin to serve him, by obtaining the new birth by his grace. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot see the kingdom of God." He is mighty to create you anew. He is merciful to hear your cry, when you entreat him to do so. Seek till you find.

To my brethren, who, as professed disciples of Christ, are professedly not of the world, let me say—Strive to keep so far beyond the separating line, to have so strong a sense of having your hearts fixed on "the things of the Spirit of God," that it will not be necessary to *search* for evidence of what you are, when the time of trial shall require the most ready and positive consciousness of being the living children of God. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace." The more of that mind, the more evidence of spiritual life; the more enjoyment of the peace of God.

But consider the importance of living thus evidently not of the world, with reference to the benefit of your example. Your profession, at its lowest terms, is a high profession. To be not of the world, while in it, a people of a new heart and another home, with affections set on God, is a high profession in such a world as this. Your walk should manifest its truth. How impressive must it be to the worldly, who have nothing beyond this world, when they see in Christians that decided love of heavenly things, that cheerful renunciation of whatever on earth is inconsistent with a spiritual mind; that comfort in present trials, derived from eternal prospects; that evident feeling, that here they have no continuing city, but are seeking one to come, which so properly belongs to their profession, as followers of Christ. Such examples are constant sermons. You know how it is when people emigrate to new countries, leaving the land of their birth for what they think a better land; how it affects their neighbors, and often makes them dissatisfied till they go also. So the effect will often be upon people of the world, when it is plain, in the spirit and walk of their friends and neighbors, especially their dearest relatives, that they have left the world, and are now but strangers here, and are pressing on towards the heritage of the people of God. Men may never go where other preaching can reach them. Sermons in the pulpit, sermons in books, they can avoid; but such living sermons they cannot escape. They go wherever *they* go, and are perpetually saying to them, "Why stand ye here all the day idle? Come away. Go with us. The good land is inviting you, as well as us. This is all barren; that is all life. Here you must

perish; there you will live forever." And that silent sermon will be felt. It often unnerves the hardest heart. And, by the blessing of the Spirit of God, honoring the preaching of the word in the examples of his people, many are thus made unwilling to put up with the world, and are finally persuaded to put in their lot with those who have renounced it, for the inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, saying, "Whither you go, we will go; your people shall be our people, and your God our God."

SERMON X.

THE TRUE ESTIMATE OF LIFE.

PSALM XC. 12.

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

THE Psalmist prayed for the teaching of God in numbering his days. What days, and what sort of numbering did he mean? Did he refer to his days that were past? But surely he could easily count them, without higher help than that of his own memory. He knew his own age. Did he refer then to days yet to come? But how could he have expected to be able to number those days? Or how could he pray to be taught to number days, the number of which God purposely, and in great wisdom, conceals from all men? What then could he have meant? It is manifest, that whether he referred to days past or future, he was speaking of numbering them in a sense very different from the mere arithmetical estimate of how many they had been or would be. It was a numbering such as mere numbers could not make. It was a numbering that was not to be satisfied with ascertaining how long he had lived or was to live. It required a higher calculus, and it could not be effectively accomplished without help from God. We understand him as if he had said in his prayer, Teach me in my meditations upon the

life I have already past, and upon the shortness, and uncertainty, and infinite interests dependent on the days yet to be lived in this world—teach me to become so deeply impressed with the view of the time already lost, and the need of diligence and faithfulness in improving the time yet to come, as a steward of God, as one who is soon to be called into judgment, as an immortal soul seeking eternal life; that I may be led to apply my heart, my whole heart, to that only true wisdom—thy service, oh! my God—and the securing of thy peace and blessedness forever!

Ah! brethren, there is need to pray for divine teaching in the study of that lesson. There is heart-work as well as head-work to be done. To apply *the heart* unto wisdom, we must first apply our hearts unto God in supplication. We need a mind enlightened by his Spirit, to be enabled to take a right view of days that are gone, their lessons of humiliation, of repentance, of warning, of thankfulness, of faith. We need wisdom from above, to be enabled so to contemplate the future—the future of this life, and the future of the world to come—all that, between this and the grave, of which we know nothing but that "the time is short;" all that beyond the grave which is "unseen and eternal;" so to number those endless days; so to measure the infinite interests at stake and the time given us to secure them; so to see the days of this life in comparison, and in their connection, with the days of the life of the world to come, that we may not sleep as do others, but be giving all diligence, redeeming the time, working while it is called to-day, lest we fail of the life eternal. Such numbering of our days, we desire now to attempt. We would undertake it in prayerful

dependence on the help of the Lord. May his teaching guide the preacher and bless the hearer!

Let us begin with our days that are *past*. But how shall we number them?—on what system—by what rule? What standard of measurement shall we adopt? Let us take the great work of life, and measure by that. What is it? *The service of God; the salvation of the soul!* Life is given, life is preserved, for that work only. It can be measured by none other. Every other line deceives. Days have no right to be called days of *life*, that have not been spent in that work. Many men are dead while they live; their natural life is all spiritual death. The man who has just begun to serve God, "in spirit and in truth," has already lived a longer term of real life than all his life before, because he has now begun the true life, for the one end of all life. He is "*alive unto God.*" In this respect, as there is an essential difference between those who live unto God and those who do not; so there is often a very important difference among those whom we must believe to be truly God's people. Some of them seem just to live. The most you can say of them is, that they are not spiritually dead. The reality of life is too feeble in them to give them any but a doubtful experience of the power of godliness and the blessedness of the love of God in Christ. The root of the matter is in them, but it is little nourished by the word of truth and faithful prayer. Weeds of earthly growth are all about it. The cold shade of worldly conformity keeps away the cherishing influence of the sun. There is no vigor, nor activity, nor lively enjoyment of the spiritual life. The fruit is scanty—just enough to indicate life. Such days count but little. In

other Christians, religion is the active out-working of a heart earnestly aspiring after more conformity, in all its affections, to God's will and holiness; a heart of prayer, of love, of zeal, of labor, of joy and peace in believing; the tree is constantly and rapidly growing in root, and branch, and fruit, drinking at every leaf of the aliment which every breeze brings to it, and every morning dew deposits upon it. Such Christian life counts rapidly. Every day adds to the numbering. No days are blank. A year of such life is a longer life; tells more upon the business of life; lays up more treasure in heaven; does more for the glory of God; contains more of the light and joy of life, than a whole long life of such slow, lukewarm, undecided, half-worldly, unaspiring, down-hearted, dust-grovelling religion as many are contented with, from whom we could not withdraw the name of Christian.

With the aid of this arithmetic, let us measure the past. Let me first address those who trust they have been born again, and have thus begun a new and spiritual life. My Christian brethren, what was all that portion of your days which elapsed before you thus began to live? What shall we call it in our present reckoning? Was it a time of life, or of death? What shall we call those days of worldliness, but days of vanity and delusion; days of blindness and infatuation; days of ingratitude, and disobedience, and hardness of heart, and impenitence, never to be remembered but with self-abasement before God, and with wonder and praise that his long suffering spared you to out-live them? But taking your position at that great era in your existence, when you were brought to life, by being brought to God, endeavor to form some

idea how much of your subsequent days should be numbered in such an estimate as we are now forming. How old are you, as Christians, in growth of grace, in victory over the world, in works of righteouness, in labors of love, in preparation to die? How much of your time have you wasted? In how much have you been faithful stewards of the mercies and gifts of God? What return have you made for the love of Him, whose whole life on earth, and whose bitter death were for you? Seen from a death-bed, seen from eternity, how do your days appear? How much dross will He find mixed up with the genuine gold, who shall come to purify his people and "refine them as gold and silver are refined?" Oh! what a soul-humbling view does this method of numbering our days, bring to a Christian; how it diminishes his real life to a humiliating remnant of life, as ore out of the mine, when the fire separates the gold; how it shows him the need of a contrite heart for his best days, and of the atoning blood of Christ, lest his best deeds and moments should bring him into condemnation. Ah! brethren, while you look to yourselves for humiliation, you must look away from yourselves for consolation. Other refuge have we none, but the boundless mercy of God, through the intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, Saviour of my soul, let me to thy bosom fly!

But I must call another class of my hearers to the numbering of their days—those who are conscious that they have no title to the character of God's servants. My friends, what is the just estimate of your past days; how many of them will bear examination by the light of that day which shall drive away all delusions and dreams,

as the sun dispels the mists of the morning? How long have you lived? I know an answer. Long enough, you can say, to have had abundance of time to become servants of God; long enough to be blessed beyond measure with the goodness, the patience, the compassion of God; long enough to be able to tell of innumerable privileges and opportunities of grace neglected and lost; long enough to heap up a fearful account of convictions unheeded, light resisted, and calls of the Spirit of God neglected. But is there not another and still more humiliating answer? Has not *all your life* been one of sin and rebellion against God? I know it is a hard saying. But the question is asked in tenderness and love, and let it be considered in simplicity and sincerity, so that this present numbering of your days may be as God will number them in the judgment.

But how can your days have been only days of sin and rebellion against God, when so much that is good and useful to others, may have resulted from them? True, you have not been religious, but you may have been quite moral and upright, living in the diligent discharge of the duties of domestic life, and of the social bond; exercising much commendable kindness and benevolence, and active good-doing towards your fellow creatures; and are you then to regard your past lives as all lost and all sin? Mind, we are speaking of *lost*, with reference to the great end of life; *lost* in respect to the one work given us to do in this world. We are speaking of *sin* and *rebellion against God*, as measured by the simple rule of the scriptures. You send a laborer into your field to do a certain work, to which you expect him to devote all the day. He does

many things that are useful to others, but *your* work he wholly neglects. Is not his time lost? Has he not spent his whole day in sinning against your command, and in rebellion against your will?

But the Saviour has given us the best illustration. "*A certain man,* (it is written,) *had a fig tree planted in his vineyard.*" You are represented in that favored tree. It was "*planted;*" there was a purpose and object in its being where it was. It was in "a *vineyard;*" not in the open highway; not on the sterile heath; but on privileged ground; fenced and cultivated. Such is your position. God has a purpose in your being here. You have a certain end to answer. You are in the midst of facilities for that end. The means of grace enrich the vineyard you live in. The water of life flows through the midst of it.

But the parable proceeds: "*He came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.*" Such, also, is your precise position before God. With all your opportunities, and privileges, and mercies, knowing so well what God expects of you, and with every motive to make you comply, God seeks in you, every day, *the fruit*—the reasonable fruit—of all his care, and culture, and goodness, and he findeth *none. None!* not a branch is bearing; not an affection is devoted to his service; no portion of life has been consecrated to him. The parable proceeds: "*Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, lo! these three years have I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down—why cumbereth it the ground?*"

Why cumbereth it the ground? Was it deserving of such a hard saying? True, that tree had never produced the fruit for which it was planted, and thus it had entirely

failed in rendering any return for its cultivation. But had it done nothing else? Had it been entirely useless? Did not the fowls of the air find a home in its branches? Did not the weary laborer find rest and shade under its foliage? Did not its falling leaves enrich the soil for other plants to feed on? Yes; but was it *planted*, was it placed in a vineyard, had it been enriched and cultivated, for such ends? It failed in the single object for which it was planted, and nourished—*fruit*—fruit after its kind. It was therefore a cumberer of the ground, and was deservedly cut down.

And is not this exactly your case? You plead that though you have not returned to God a life devoted to his service, a life of love to him, and of the following of Christ, your days have not been without usefulness in various collateral relations. We deny it not. We hope it is true of all of you, whom we are now specially addressing. But that is not the question. Has God found in you that fruit which every year, every day, he has sought? Where has been your heart? On what have your affections been set? In what have you sought your happiness? Where has your treasure been? Plead that you have not lived in vain; but have you lived unto God? Can he number your days as days of service to him, when another will than his has held all the mastery? The voice of God has been following you at every step, saying: "My son, give me thy heart;" and never has that voice been obeyed; always has that heart, with its whole energy of will and affection, been given to other gods, the gods of the vanities of this world; and is it too much then, my friends, to say that therefore, as sure as the barren fig tree was con-

demned as a cumberer of the ground, your days must be numbered as only days of sin and rebellion against God; days in which, while all your life was the gift of his grace, and all your blessings came from his Providence, and your every breath was from his forbearance and mercy, God was practically rejected, and his will denied. Alas! this is a fearful view of the past, especially as you know not how short the future will be before it becomes eternity. I wish indeed, we had not to say such painful things to any body. But when they are the solemn truth, the more we love you, the more must we say them to you, affectionately, but so plainly that as much as possible, their painfulness may be felt.

And now we turn to the *future*. What future is there to us, before that endless future begins its course? How many days to come may we number before that life comes that has no days, or years, or centuries—*that ever and ever*, into which all years, all times, empty as rivers into the ocean? How long have we yet to live? I mean, to live *here;* for we have always to live. The Psalmist prayed, "Lord, let me know mine end and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." Our end, the measure of our days! Of course, in the way of numerical computation, we cannot know it now. But, in the way of a serious impression of how near our end is, and how precious our time is, we *can* know what it is. We can do just as the Psalmist did. He measured his days by the eternity of God. Thus he began: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth or the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." "A thousand years in thy

sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night." A thousand years in God's sight, but as yesterday! Yea, because God's measure of duration is eternity. The Psalmist, measuring by the same line, looked at the longest age of man on earth. "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow, for it is soon cut off and we fly away." "In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down and withered." * Thus did a life of fourscore years appear, when seen in the shadow of an eternal future. Let us get that same view. Suppose that by reason of strength we should lengthen out our journey here, with labor and sorrow, to those *fourscore years* — How long they look from childhood; how short will they look from a death-bed! How long when we compare them only with shorter periods, as a year is long compared with an hour; but how short, in comparison with everlasting ages! Oh! Lord, so teach us to number our days; so teach us to feel their exceeding insignificance as they stand beside eternity; so teach us to feel their unspeakable magnitude and preciousness as days that must decide what we shall be, where we shall be, what our endless portion—happiness with God, or misery in banishment from God, forever and ever!

But threescore years and ten! what right have we to count on any such length of days! "*Boast not thyself of to-morrow*," saith the warning voice of God's word, "*for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.*" "*Go to, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city*

* Ps. xc., 2 and 4; 10 and 6.

and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain, whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away." * What a rebuke to your confident calculations upon years to come! What a gloomy shadow it brings over all the schemes of a worldly mind — the buying, and selling, and getting gain, and laying up treasure on earth, and trying to be happy without hope in eternity, and without God for a refuge and portion. Oh! what a gloomy cloud when you once realize, as sometimes the most worldly mind is forced to do, that all of life is such a mere vapor; that its surest and proudest calculations may be so easily and awfully disappointed. Ye know not what *ye* shall be on the morrow. Ye may be dead on the morrow; ye may be disembodied spirits on the morrow; ye may have received your everlasting condemnation on the morrow; ye may be beyond the reach of hope on the morrow; the eternal night of darkness and of despair unutterable may have settled down upon your soul, to-morrow. Oh! that solemn warning, "*Ye know not what shall be on the morrow,*" so often preached by the funerals of those that die unprepared; that hand-writing on the wall of every earthly habitation which so many are afraid to read, lest like the King of Babylon in his banqueting house, their thoughts should trouble them, and their eyes should see too plainly the vanity and folly of their worldly idolatry; I would that it could appear to you in every temple of Mammon, in every house of feasting, in every street of business, in all the cares and interests and attractions of home, in all scenes

* James iv., 13, 14.

of gayety and mirth, *everywhere.* And if it be too serious, too impressive a monitor to suit your occupation; if the zeal of any worldly scheme, if the gayety of any pleasure, if the relish of any amusement, cannot bear to be so confronted with the uncertainty of life and the nearness of the judgment to come; if you could not read that writing of God without feeling it an unwelcome intrusion upon your occupation or your pleasure, out of place because not in keeping with what you are about; then be sure your pleasure or occupation is out of place, not befitting, either in itself, or else in the spirit in which you pursue it, the position, the relations, the interests of a sinner whose days are so few, and beneath whose feet, at his next step, the grave may open, Oh! let us try to realize, always and everywhere, what we are, whither going, what we have at stake, what we have to do. We speak of dying. Shall we ever die? *Can* we die if we would? We shall suffer dissolution. The mysterious bond between body and soul will be divided. We shall depart hence. But *we—this within,* that thinks, and sees, and speaks—*this soul,* will never cease its thinking, and remembering, and enjoying or suffering. It cannot die if it would. Once embarked in life, onward you must go, living and living forever and ever; no door to escape out of being; no refuge from the necessity of life; one thing or other your unchangeable portion—the home of the saved, or the portion of the lost.

How can we number the days of such a future? There is a way. If we cannot compute, we can contemplate. We can survey the ocean, which we cannot measure; we can compare with its boundless bosom the narrow streams

that empty therein; we can consider the tides of life that are continually pouring their contributions of immortal souls into that eternity; we can think of all that is beyond the horizon which now bounds our view, and all that is beneath, in those fathomless depths which no mortal thought can penetrate; we can get an impressive sight of what is length of days on earth, as measured by the contrast of the life to come—a foot-print on an ocean shore. We can thus obtain some view of the preciousness of a good hope in Christ Jesus, and the unspeakable littleness of every thing in comparison. We can so number the days of that eternal future, as to form some answer to that question of our Lord, which many dare not answer—*What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* And thus, we can realize something of the folly of the man who makes this world his portion, doing nothing to save his soul; something of the weighty argument that enforces those constant exhortations of the scriptures—"Be ye ready;" "Prepare to meet your God;" "Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life;" "Give all diligence;" "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;" "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." One glance at eternity! a moment's drawing aside of the veil! with what power would it preach those exhortations; how it would expose the folly of a worldly life, and convince you of the preciousness of the refuge that is in Christ!

Brethren, must we not all adopt the prayer of the text, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom"? Let our hearts be now applied to

the study, that we may know what the true wisdom is for us.

Son of man, have you secured a hope, in Christ, of acceptance with God? Are you laying up treasure in heaven? Have you repented, and fled to Him who is our only refuge from the condemnation of sin? Have you the peace of God, and are you striving to retain it, till he calls you to his presence? What answers your soul to these questions? "*No?* I have not found, I have not sought, I have not repented. Here I am, an immortal soul, eternity at hand, all my work undone, all my portion here—no home to go to when I die, no Saviour secured to comfort and save when I go hence—all God's mercies to be accounted for, all his will undone." Then, poor sinful man, what is the wisdom to which thy heart should be applied? Art thou willing to meet death in such a state? Canst thou stand before God in such a state? Ah! how dreadful to have your day of grace ended in such a state.

What is wisdom? One thing is wisdom for thee; all else is foolishness, in comparison. Apply thine heart instantly, earnestly, entirely, to the effort to obtain the peace of God, through that merciful and compassionate Saviour, who waits to receive your petitions, to help your infirmities, to cleanse you from your sins, and to embrace you in his love. May I not entreat you, in the name of that poor soul which you have so neglected; in the name of that eternal portion of bliss or woe which you have so much forgotten; in the name of that God whose peace is so precious, whose wrath is a consuming fire; in the name of Jesus, that most gracious Saviour, whose love and sufferings for you have been so ungratefully slighted;

must I not entreat you, delay no more. Seek eternal life, while it may be attained; escape the wrath to come, before it be come; do the work of him that sent you, before he shall send for you to give account of your work; cease to cumber the ground with barrenness, lest barrenness and hopelessness be your portion forever. Oh! seek your endless portion in Christ. Bring that sin-fettered, world-oppressed soul to Christ! He will set it free. Bring that poor, wearied, burdened, disappointed heart, to Christ! He will give it rest. Dying sinner, whose days are numbered, and whose sins have brought on you the condemnation of God, flee to Christ, and he will be to you a hope that maketh not ashamed, and a peace that passeth understanding.

My Christian brethren—ye who hope in Christ, and trust you are his—what is the lesson for you in the views we have been taking? What is the wisdom to which your hearts should be applied? I answer, the wisdom of a greater earnestness in the whole work and life of a disciple of Christ. It is a short time you have to live for the glory of your Lord in this evil world. It is a short time you have to do good, where there is so much evil; and to seek the salvation of your fellow creatures, where so many are perishing. It is a short time ye have to get ready to meet death as Christians should meet it, rejoicing in Christ your Saviour, and feeling that death hath no sting remaining, nor the grave any fears. Ye are prepared to die, if ye be in Christ Jesus; but ye may not be so prepared as to *feel* prepared. Your *sense* of a good hope may not be strong. Your *evidence* of being in Christ may not be such as to free your minds from many

painful doubts which you would fear to encounter on a death bed. We want to go down into the valley and shadow of death with our hope all determined, our consolation all ascertained; no need of an anxious examination of evidence; no room for a painful suspicion that we have been crying peace, when there was no peace. We want to be found prepared, not only to go safely, but joyfully; not only alive unto God, but looking for, and hasting unto, that day, when he shall call us hence. We want to be found with our loins girt about, as servants waiting for their Lord; with our staff in hand, as pilgrims waiting to go home; with our lamps trimmed and burning, as the wise waiting for the coming of Him who saith, "*I come quickly.*" Christian brethren, apply your hearts to such wisdom. Seek to become more weaned from the world. Endeavor to make the most profitable investment of your remaining days, and of the talents entrusted to you, for the good of man and the glory of your Lord. Practise constantly on the rule of looking, not at the things that are seen and temporal, but at those which are not seen and eternal. Live, and pray, and work, as those whose eyes are thus opened and thus elevated; who see in open vision the things eternal—the unseen God, the unseen glory of his people, the eternal misery of the lost. Seek a bright and shining hope; seek a strong faith, that lays hold vigorously on the promises, and puts on the whole armor of God, and stands complete in "the righteousness which is of God, by faith." Be it your every day's work to apply your hearts to that wisdom. You will reap if you faint not. The hour of your death will be your recompense.

Brethren, friends—all—we must all *pray* to be taught of God, or we shall never learn from the solemn lessons we have been considering. What I have said to you to-day, how often have you heard before, and with how little benefit. How often have your days been numbered before you, so that you have seen the shortness of your time and your eternity just at hand, and have felt the exceeding folly of a careless, worldly life, and have turned away and continued the same careless, worldly life, as if the future were all a dream, and the present were all the reality. These world-blinded hearts, these sin-palsied hearts, how slow to learn in such a school. To read the page is easy. To understand the truth, and take it away in your memory, is easy. But to have it written in our hearts; to get its impression, and keep it, so that it shall abide in us; so to learn the lesson, that we shall learn by it, and be wise in heart, unto salvation; for this we must not trust ourselves; we must *pray;* we must apply our hearts unto Him who alone giveth wisdom; we must take the lesson to the engraver, and beg Him who can write his law in our inward parts, to grave it upon our hearts, so that nothing shall erase it, and so it shall speak to us by the wayside and the fireside, in our business and in our enjoyments, in solitude and in company—everywhere; keeping us solemnly in mind that the end of all things is at hand; ever urging us to count all things but loss for Christ, that we may be found in him. Oh! yes, we must pray—Lord teach us so to number our days, so to apply our hearts! We must pray for one another. We must pray for the careless and unconcerned. We must pray for those who pray not for themselves. What we all

need is, seeing "the time is short," and "the fashion of this world passeth away," that "they that weep be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they bought not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it." We want, not only an abiding sense of the shortness of our time remaining for our great work, but an humble, contrite sense of how the time past condemns us for our unprofitableness, and a solemn sense of the unutterable worth of the soul that each of us has to save, with such a spirit of earnest application of life, and love, and strength, to the following of Christ, that we certainly shall not come short of the inheritance of his saints. Lord, so teach us. Write that law of life on our hearts. Evermore give us that wisdom. Help us to be ever pressing "toward the mark, for the prize of our high calling of God, in Christ Jesus." So teach us always to pray, and always to learn! Amen.

SERMON XI.

THE NATURE AND EFFICACY OF SAVING FAITH.

JOHN iii. 36.

"He that beleveth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

NONE who read the scriptures can fail to notice how much is there made of *faith*, as essential to a truly religious life, and the salvation of the soul. The jailor of Philippi rushes in fear and trembling before his prisoners, Paul and Silas, and begs to know what he must do to be saved. Their simple answer is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." A poor blind man pushes his way through a crowd, and gets to Jesus, begging that his eyes may be opened. Jesus grants his prayer, opens his eyes, and then ascribes all to his faith. "Thy faith hath saved thee." Our blessed Lord sends his apostles to preach the Gospel to every creature, and underwrites their commission with these emphatic words: "He that believeth shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall be damned."

But for strength of declaration on this head, we need not look any further than the text: "He that believeth on the Son hath life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." You see how directly and essentially everlasting life is here connected with the possession of faith in Christ. He that

has a true faith in Christ, is now in possession of life eternal. He who has it not, is now abiding under the wrath of God.

Now, we should not think much of the reflecting disposition of that man, who, accustomed to the usual thoughts on the subject of saving faith, had never been struck with something pparently so peculiar, so unlike what we are accustomed to in all other interests of man, in this absolute dependence of everlasting life and death singly on the possession of faith in Christ, as to have felt there was a difficulty which he would much desire to have removed. I suppose there is a large number of minds, among the respectful hearers of the gospel, who are conscious, all the time, of a want of satisfaction on that subject; and another class, among serious and earnest Christians, to whom, while it may present no difficulty, it is a subject about which they feel that they have little to say, except that it is the plan of Him who is infinitely wise and merciful, thus to make believing in Jesus the turning point of life or death to the sinner's soul.

We desire to show that there is much more to be said than that; that faith is not so peculiar in its connection with salvation, nor so unlike its position in all other concerns of man, as is much imagined; that the exceedingly prominent and essential position assigned to faith, in the economy of our salvation, and in all the Christian life, instead of having no parallel in other interests of man, is in precise conformity with what we are familiar with in all other human interests; so that, from all our connections with nature and Providence, from all our worldly concerns and relations, we should have had reason to anticipate

that the place and function of faith, in all our spiritual interests, would be just what the scriptures represent it.

But I must first correct a prevalent, but very erroneous idea, of the *nature of the faith* required in the Gospel. It is a common supposition, arising out of the great things attributed to faith in the scriptures, such as the believer's union to Christ, his justification in the righteousness of Christ, his victory over the world, &c., that it is some principle of the regenerate heart, so peculiar, so entirely above nature, and so exclusively pertaining to the Gospel, that there is nothing elsewhere corresponding to, or partaking of, its character. That there is such a thing as faith between man and man, in the ordinary concerns of human life, is of course understood; but the idea is, that between such natural faith, and that of the Christian believer, successfully prosecuting the work of his salvation, there is nothing in common. Faith that saves the soul, through Christ, we know is asserted in the scriptures to be "*the gift of God.*"* It is therefore supposed that it must be unlike, in all things, that faith which is only *the gift of nature.*

We shall take good heed, that in correcting this idea, we do not, in the slightest degree, reduce your conception of *saving* faith, as being never a natural endowment of the human heart, and never attainable by man without the converting grace of God; never attained but by the direct act of the Holy Spirit upon man's mind and heart, convincing him of his ruined state as a sinner, condemned under the law of God; revealing to him the preciousness of Christ, as his only and perfect refuge, and enabling

*Eph. ii. 8.

him to embrace and rest thereon with a joyful hope of salvation. Faith is thus most truly and exclusively "*the gift of God.*" But must we not say the same of *love to God?* Is not the love in which all the law is fulfilled, and which, in its various degrees of perfectness, is the sum and substance of all piety, as much the gift of God as saving faith? And yet, do any suppose that it is a grace so peculiar to vital religion, so entirely supernatural, that in the natural man there is no corresponding affection? Is not the love of a dutiful son to an affectionate father an emotion very nearly corresponding to that of a child of God towards his Father in heaven? Must we have an entirely new affection created within us, before we can love God; or only an old natural affection made new by having a new heart given to it; made new by being transferred from the creature to the Creator, and set upon our Father in heaven? And when, according to the scriptures, we hold, that the love of God in our hearts cometh only by the gift of his Spirit working in us, what is meant, but that the affection of love, implanted in us by nature, and kept, by the bondage of our fallen nature, grovelling amidst earthly things, and incapable of ascending to God, has been, by the power of his Spirit, regenerated, purified, and exalted, so that what was before only the supreme love of the world, and the things therein, is now the supreme love of God and his will. In a few words, to love is the gift of nature. To love God is the gift of grace.

Now, precisely what we have said of the nature and peculiarity of the love of God in the heart, is equally true of a saving faith in Christ. In our unregenerate

state, faith is as universal as love. The child trusts in his mother as naturally as he loves her. Mutual reliance is as natural between man and man as mutual love. This reliance is nothing but *faith*, in its entire definition. And the difference between such natural faith and religious, saving faith, is not that they are two entirely separate things, but that the one is regenerated into the other; a new heart is given it, so that now, instead of satisfying itself with earthly things to trust in, it embraces the heavenly; instead of contenting itself with hewing out to itself cisterns that can hold no water, it rests for happiness upon the fullness of God; instead of seeking salvation in our own righteousness, it embraces promises of God in Christ, and in doing so embraces the Christ in all the offices and relations which he sustains to us; his will as well as his grace; the precept of his present service as well as the hope of his everlasting blessedness. And because this great change can no more take place in the natural faith of the heart than the corresponding change in the heart's natural love, without the direct gift of God's Holy Spirit, therefore, most justly is it said of saving faith, that it is "*not of yourselves, but the gift of God.*" So that just as we said of love, we now say of this. Faith is the gift of nature. But saving faith in Christ is exclusively the gift of grace. To believe and to live by faith, is born with us. To believe with the heart in Christ, and live thereby unto God, is not ours till we are born again.

But we advance a further step. Not only do we find in the natural faith of men that which is so akin to the saving faith of the Gospel; but the exceeding prominence

assigned to the latter in thewhole plan of salvation, in all our spiritual interests and duties, is precisely correspondent to the position held by the natural faith of man, in all his temporal concerns; in all that constitutes the welfare of human society; so that it would be a departure from all that we are accustomed to in the divine arrangements for our secular interests and duties, did we find in the provisions of the Gospel for our spiritual and eternal welfare, any less essential and prominent position assigned to faith than that in which the scriptures have placed it.

But you tell me that such is the exceeding prominence of faith in the religion of Christ, that every thing in the saving of the soul is made to hinge on that one gift; that without it there can be no true piety, no interest in Christ, no salvation; and with it, we are "in Christ," and have eternal life; that it is the tree to which all the other manifestations of personal religion belong as its fruit, and without which they can no more be produced than grapes can grow without the stock and root of the vine. True! But what less can you say of natural faith in all that pertains to the personal, domestic and social relations of man in the present life? Does not the whole movement of this world, as a world of mind and heart and mutual interests and innumerable connections, between man and man, turn upon the single pivot of *faith?*

Take man at his birth. What is the whole existence of the feeble, helpless infant, but a life of the most simple, implicit faith. He literally *lives by faith.* Take away his unquestioning faith in his mother's love and care, and what will become of his life? And when the time arrives for his education, how can he receive the first

communications of knowledge but by an elementary and implicit faith? Must he discuss the necessity or the propriety of the alphabet before he will receive it? And to the end of life, how large a part of all he will ever know as matter of fact, must be known by faith only; by reliance on the testimony of men! How can he know of distant lands which he never sees, but by such faith alone?

Suppose a man to have no faith in his fellow-man, and what can you imagine more helpless or more wretched! Suppose a family, the members of which are without faith in one another, and how is it possible there can be any family life? And thus advancing to the social relations of a whole nation, how immediately would you dissolve the bonds of civilized communities, and annihilate all the combinations and reciprocal dependencies which make the basis of society, and how would you substitute a condition worse than even of the lowest barbarism you ever heard of, were you to take away from a people merely their faith in one another. Nothing more distinguishes a civilized from a savage state, than the extension of the exercise of faith. By the growth of faith in one another, combinations for mutual benefit become more easy and more numerous and more efficient. Thus arise power and accumulation of the means of further improvement. Knowledge grows with this union of minds. Laws extend their protection, because men rely on one another for their observance and support. Commerce spreads its wings, and arts and all the blessings of cultivated life attain dominion on the strength of the confidence of man in man. How lives the vast system of pecuniary exchange that binds the whole business world together, embracing in its

connections, all countries, all classes, all interests, so that were it stopped, there must take place a dissolution in the secular interests of men like that in our bodies, when the circulation of the blood has ceased; how lives that whole system but by faith? And in the world of letters, what if the faith that now receives and acts confidently on reports of distant lands, or of important phenomena in nature, or of valuable experiments in science, were extinct, so that instead of being ever willing to rely on human testimony, we must verify everything by our own observation or experiment—how then could knowledge increase or science advance; what could we ever know beyond the narrow horizon of our own personal inspection? How know we even to prepare for the morrow, but by our faith that the laws which regulate the present, will alike extend into the future? Certainly it needs no more words to show how innumerable are the ramifications of faith in our most ordinary concerns; how they run in all directions, extend to all particulars, and embrace the utmost extremities of the social system, so as not only to bind together its several members in one harmonious movement, but like the arteries in our bodies, to supply the very life by which it exists.

But is there any thing beyond this in the importance attached to faith in the Gospel? Is that faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which is "the gift of God," of any more necessity to the present life of piety within us or to the future salvation of our souls, according to the revelation of God in the scriptures, than is that faith which is the gift of nature to the dearest earthly interests of every individual, family and nation?

But let us come to some of the special powers and effects of faith, as ascribed to it in the scriptures.

We read, for example, in an epistle of St. John, that "whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world; and this is *the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith.*"* It is a property, then, of a living and saving faith, that *it overcomes the world.* Faith in the individual Christian, will give him, through the power of God, such a victory over the world, that he will successfully resist all the influences with which it opposes his going out of it, and living unto God, and journeying toward the heavenly land. It will make him victorious in his daily conflicts with its temptations, and will carry him triumphantly to the end of his pilgrimage, where the battle will cease and the crown of life be gained. The same faith will make the whole Church of Christ, by the power of its Divine Head, ultimately victorious over the whole world. By faith, it will "subdue kingdoms;" it will remove mountains of obstacle now presented by idolatry, and superstition, and worldliness, and all sinfulness; it will "quench the violence of fire," which the combined powers of infidelity, and popery, and anarchy will kindle around it; a Red sea of dangers will divide before it; the walls of the mystic Babylon, like those of Jericho of old, will fall before it; it will stop the mouths of lions, gnashing their teeth against it; it will "have trial" hereafter, as in past ages, "of cruel mockings and scourgings—yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment;" and many of the children and soldiers of faith may be slain; but it is written in the "sure word of prophecy," that "the kingdom, and dominion, and the

* 1 John, v. 4.

greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all nations shall serve and obey Him."* And this is the victory that by the power of God, will thus overcome the world, even the combined *faith* of the people of God. And what is all this but just, in greater extension, what faith has been achieving from the beginning? Did not Moses overcome the world by a wonderful victory, when he refused the honor, and power, and wealth connected with being "called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" and "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt?" And was it not his faith, "enduring as seeing Him that is invisible," and "having respect unto the recompense of the reward" at God's right hand, that gained that victory?† And did not faith overcome the world in each soldier of that noble army of martyrs, who, amidst the persecutions of all ages, enlisted under Christ, and fought a good fight, and finished their course, and entered into the glory of God, "more than conquerors?" The world slew them; but in consenting to be slain, rather than obey the world to the dishonoring of Christ, they overcame the world. The same was the victory of that "glorious company of the Apostles," who by faith in the words of their Lord, "*I am with you always, even to the end of the world,*" issued forth from Jerusalem, to assault, single handed, the empire of darkness, over the whole earth, and ceased not their work till a great multitude in every land had renounced the world and become obedient unto God.

But is there any thing singular or strange in this con-

* Dan. vii. 27. † Heb. xi. 24–27.

nection of faith? Is there nothing analogous thereto in what the natural faith of man accomplishes away from the duties of the service of God? I would not for a moment keep out of view the infinite superiority of a gospel faith over every other form and operation of faith, in its property so to enable the Christian to overcome the world, that in his heart, and spirit, and life, he is no more *of* it; but one of "a peculiar people," who declare, in all their affections and life, that they "have here no continuing city or abiding place, but are seeking one to come." "No man can do such miracles except God be with him." But there is a faith which, in an unspeakably lower field, and for infinitely less precious ends, and against far less opposition, overcomes the world. The man who sets his heart, not indeed on treasure in heaven, but upon the treasures of golden mines in a far distant land, and puts such faith in the promises of wealth to him who will go there and search the sands, and the rocks, and encounter all the perils and endure all the hardships inseparable from the effort, that notwithstanding all the resistance of all that he loves, and all that he has in this world, he makes the needed sacrifice of every personal comfort, and domestic attachment, and worldly connection; and, with a brave will, battles all the dangers and difficulties of the long, disheartening journey by the way of the wilderness and the savage, fearing neither hunger, nor cold, nor nakedness, and reaches at last the scene of his anticipated labors—is there no victory that overcometh the world in him? True, it is the power of a worldly dominion in his heart overcoming the obstacles of the world without; it is a victory that uses the attractions of one promise of the world against those

of all the world besides; it only makes the conqueror, more than ever, the slave of the world; but it is a great victory to be gained over such obstacles and at such cost; and that which obtains it is *faith*. Nothing but strong faith in the promises that came from that distant land, of golden gains; faith investing those things unseen and distant with the influence of things present and seen, could take such possession of the mind, and nerve it for such labors and sacrifices.

But let us take another example. A great Captain overcame with his armies many nations — a large part of the earth. But how? Not by superiority of numbers, for the vanquished nations far exceeded his array. Not by superior personal courage, for armies are generally much alike in that respect. *Superiority of discipline* is said to have decided the contest. But what is the soul, and bond, and strength of military discipline, but faith? That which binds the regiment into one compact and steady array, and enables it to move as one man, obeying without confusion, and without fear, the orders of the head, unbroken by assault, unaffected by dangers, is not the mere practice of evolution, but it is something without which all such practice would come to nought in the hour of conflict — *confidence, reliance* — not the reliance of each man upon himself, but of each in all the rest; and, especially, the confidence of all in the leading head. The weak are made strong by such faith. The fearful are made bold by such faith. The hundreds have overcome the thousands by such faith. Without it, the strong become weak, the bold become fearful; and the greater the number, the worse the defeat and the dismay.

I am well aware that whatever examples I may produce of the operation of the natural faith of man surmounting great difficulties, and accomplishing great victories, in pursuit of some engrossing end, must come immeasurably short of a just resemblance, in many respects, of that elevated faith which is "mighty, through God," to overcome the world. But we are looking for analogies, not equals; for faith in the world, occupying a position towards the world, similar, in its low and contracted sphere, to that of faith in the hearts of those who are "not of the world" in its high endeavors to attain the kingdom of God.

There is certainly a boundless difference in character and spirit between the faith that overcomes the world out of the love of it, and that it may have the more of it — and that which overcomes the world because it has renounced it, and is endeavoring to get as much delivered as possible from its entanglements and attractions. You describe a vast gulf between the two, when you say of the faith which God gives by his grace, that it "worketh by love," the love of God, the love of holiness, the love of unseen and eternal blessedness with Christ; and can say nothing better of the faith that is naturally in us, than that, if it ever work by love, it is only by the love of things on the earth, as empty and fleeting as the shadow. And in point of operation, what comparison is there between the faith which, in accomplishing its ends, has no power to rest on but man's, and that which, because it is engaged in the work of God, in obedience to his word, and in the assurance of his promises, has the power of his omnipotent arm to nerve it and make it victorious? The former can never rise above the arm of flesh it leans to. All it

gains is of its own level. The latter must rise to the arm above, which it holds to. Its conquests must be as high as heaven, and as eternal as God.

But vast as is the difference in point of character and operation, there is a strict analogy between the position of our natural faith as connected with every worldly enterprise, and that of a saving faith as connected with the great enterprise of every Christian believer, to overcome and live above the world.

But let us take another instance of the great prominence assigned to faith in the scriptures. We read the words of our Lord Jesus, where he says: "*I am the bread of life;*" in which single expression he embraces all our salvation as being found in him. Then he says: "*He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst;*"* thus making faith not only the way, but the certain way, by which we are to partake of him and live forever. St. Paul, in enforcing this doctrine, said: "*We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence* (faith) *steadfast unto the end;*" † thus teaching that not only is it faith that obtains Christ and makes him ours, but that it is the steadfast continuance of faith alone that retains him as ours, and will finally insure to the soul the everlasting possession of that living bread. And in the same connection are the words of the text: "*He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life.*" The act of faith is here immediately connected with our being partakers of Christ, with our coming into saving union with him, and being justified in his righteousness; and thus it is connected with the

* John vi. 35. † Heb. iii. 14.

present possession of life with God, and life everlasting. But this wonderful blessing, consequent upon the simple act of believing with the heart in Christ, is it illustrated by any analogy to be found in the efficacy of that faith which resides naturally in man, and operates in his daily interests?

What is it that goes on continually between the physician and the sick? A man is dying with a malady, against which all his own efforts, and the skill of those about him, have proved ineffectual. He is told of a physician at a distance, of whose power over disease he receives such evidence and assurance, that he is persuaded that if he can only get to him he can be saved. At much expense and much effort, in his weakness, he goes to that physician, places himself in his hands, surrenders himself implicitly to his direction, to be conformed in all things to his requirements. Thus he comes into union with that physician. There is a vital connection formed between the malady of the one and the power of the other. The sick man is thus a partaker of the physician, in all his skill and power to heal. But what has made him thus a partaker? what has formed this union, whereby he escapes from death? Is it not his *faith?* It was simply because he so fully believed in the physician, that he came to him; that he placed himself in his hands; that he obeyed all his most painful requirements. Without faith he would not have done so. By faith was the union formed between himself, as dying, and the skill of that physician, as mighty to save him.

Now, you well know that the salvation which is offered to us in Christ, is presented to us in the light of a gra-

cious and all-sufficient remedy for our dying condition under the internal dominion of sin, and the condemnation of God's violated law. Jesus comes to us as the physician, mighty to save to the uttermost all who believe in his name. He "healed all that came unto him," in the days of his ministry on earth, of all their "divers diseases and torments" of body, in order to show how ready and able he is to comfort and deliver all that ever thereafter should mourn the power of sin, and the burden of its condemnation on the soul.

Let us then suppose the case of a sinner thus feeling his spiritual necessities. He has tried all the expedients which self-reliance and human aid could suggest, and now feels that he is as helpless as he is sinful and needy. The gracious call of Christ is heard, saying, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." It comes to him with convincing evidence that to Christ he cannot apply in vain. He comes to the Saviour, embraces his promises, surrenders himself to his grace, submits himself to his will. Thus are all his necessities brought into union with all the saving grace that is in Christ Jesus. Thus does he become a "*partaker*" in all which that gracious physician has invited him to seek in him. He now hath life in Christ. And what has brought him to that possession? What has set him down at the feet of Jesus, to do just what he directs, but faith? It was because he did not believe in any other refuge, that he renounced all others. It was because he did believe in this one refuge, that he fled to it, and was made partaker in its salvation; and now he will be the final partaker of Christ unto life eter-

nal, if he shall only "*hold the beginning of his confidence steadfast unto the end.*"

Thus, we are prepared for the strong declaration of the text: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

We do not see but that, as regards the points now in view, that text, in its first declaration, has its entire parallel and illustration in the case of every sick man, who, in reliance upon a physician's skill, applies to him, adopts his prescriptions, and is delivered from death by his care; and in its second declaration, has its entire parallel in the case of every sick man who might equally be healed, but, because he chooses some other help, and will not entrust his case to him who is able to heal, must die. He that believed in the physician, has life. He that believeth not, shall not have life, but the power of death abideth on him.

If God, in his wise providence, has thus suspended the cure of the body upon the exercise of faith, is it a matter of wonder that in the appointments of his grace, he should make the salvation of our souls as much dependent on the exercise of a true faith in the exclusive sufficiency of our Lord Jesus Christ? Do we not see that the position of faith in the Gospel, as essential to our being partakers of Christ, so far from being such a peculiarity of the Gospel, that it has no parallel any where else, and has no explanation but that so hath God ordained, is no more than the carrying out, in our highest concerns, of the ways of God, as they are ordered in all the temporal interests of man, so that if it were possible that we should be

saved through Christ, in any other way than by believing upon him, it would be a departure, not only from the repeated declarations of God's word, but also from all the ways of his providence.

In truth, the position of faith in the heart of the Christian as regards the life of his piety, and the strength of all its operations towards God, is just the restoration of what dates its origin as far back as the creation. Faith in God was as much the feature of man before he fell under the power of sin, as love to God. His whole perfect walk was of the simplest, most implicit and affectionate trust. The divine word on which his faith rested, was written in his own enlightened conscience and faithful heart; was written in every illuminated page of the great volume of nature; was heard in his direct and daily communion with his Maker. None, ever since, have walked as perfectly by faith, as did Adam, before he fell; as none have ever walked as perfectly in love. "Faith that worketh by love," was more mature in Paradise than it has ever been out of it.

But the fall of man dislocated both his love and faith. It destroyed neither; but it separated both from God. Love remained; but not love to God. Faith remained; but not a living faith in God. And now the prominence of our natural faith in all the concerns of this life; its continual and essential operation, from the most simple trusting of childhood, through all the complex reliances of our manhood; and then down again to the simplicity of a second childhood, so that it is as true in secular life as in spiritual, that we live by faith—what is all this but the remnant, the detached fragment, of that implicit, and all compre-

hensive, faith in God which once reigned supreme in the heart of man; and which, because it embraced the whole will of God, connected itself with and sanctified the whole world that God created? Faith then, was all religious faith, whatever its secular connections; because then the most ordinary and secular act and interest was directly associated with and part of the service and worship of God. All life was religion, as all religion was life.

Now, it is the office of the grace of God, dispensed through Christ our Mediator, to restore religious faith to its original supremacy in the heart and life of man; to regenerate the present natural faith in the creature, so that it shall be a living, saving faith in the Creator; to take up that fallen fragment as it lies broken away from God, like a chain that has lost its upward fastening, and now is dragging along in the dust; to lift it up again to God; link it again to his throne; then carry it from man to man, till every heart has moored itself thereto; and so to unite all mankind in one happy reliance on the promises, in one happy obedience to the will, in one happy participation in the blessing and salvation, of God.

But in saying that the faith required of the Christian for salvation, is just the restoration of a faith which is as old as the creation of man, I must be understood as speaking *only of its essential nature and its prominent position* in religion. In *the exercise* of faith, there is something peculiar to the Gospel, and which, before sin came into the world, and the promise of a Saviour was made, could not exist. Religion and salvation are now so inseparably associated in our thoughts, that we can scarcely imagine them

divided. But before the coming in of sin, man's religion, which was then in its perfectness, had no reference to salvation. There was no salvation to be attained, because there was nothing lost. Man was safe, as long as he continued what he was. But he sinned, and thus was lost. A salvation and a Saviour were now required. Henceforth religion was all about *salvation;* and the Saviour, then promised, and now sent of God to seek and to save that which is lost, became, as he ever must be, the great and precious object and refuge in the sight of sinners. To get to Christ; to be partakers of him, in all his offices, as the one Mediator between God and man, became at once the great matter. Thus it is that faith *in the Lord Jesus Christ,* faith as the approach of the soul to *him* who is the sinner's way to God and God's way to sinners, became so leading a feature in true religion; not faith in any new prominence, but in an entirely new direction; not faith rendered any more essential to religion than it was before, but performing its essential office by seeking deliverance from a misery which man had not before, and embracing a remedy which man needed not before; faith seeking God, by first resting in a Mediator, and looking unto Jesus as the Author and the Finisher of all its hope.

But we must not omit to speak of a peculiarity in the saving faith whereby we become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, which eminently distinguishes it from that natural faith of the human heart with which we have compared it. It is described as "*faith that worketh by love.*"* That is, not only is it working, operative, influential, as all faith, whether of the natural or regenerate heart, whether occupied with secular or eternal things,

* Gal. v. 6.

must be, unless it be only nominal; but the operative character of saving, gospel faith, is distinguished by this notable peculiarity, that "it worketh *by love*," by the love of him on whom its trust is placed, Jesus Christ; by the love of God, unto whom it comes through Christ; by the love of his will and service, and by the love of all his people for his sake. Hence the true believer is drawn by the affections of his heart to desire, and to walk in, the path of holiness; not merely because, without holiness, he knows he cannot be saved, but because he loves holiness as the very image and likeness of God. Take away that operative love, thus drawing him to delight in the will of him on whose promises his faith is placed, and that faith *is dead*. It is but the lifeless form of faith, about as much like the saving faith of the gospel, as a corpse is like the living man. It may join him to the visible Church, but it cannot unite him to Christ; it may make him a partaker of the visible fellowship of true believers, but it cannot introduce him to that invisible communion wherein true believers are partakers of Christ, in the imputation of his righteousness to justify them, and the communication of his Spirit to sanctify them.

But it is needless to show that the natural faith of the human heart, which, as we have seen, in point of prominence and importance in secular affairs, is so analogous to that of the Gospel, has no such attribute. It is a working faith, however. It is not dead in regard to its appropriate office. It strongly embraces all the promises it has to rest upon. But it does not necessarily work *by love*. For example, is it the faith of the sick man seeking the physician's aid, trusting in his skill, conforming to his

directions? It is operative, it is obedient, and it may be successful, though, in place of having any love for the physician, or for the obedience of his will, by which to work, there may be the strongest aversion to both, an aversion overcome only by the stronger love of life.

And now let me return once more, in conclusion, to the particular words of the text:

"He that believeth on the Son, *hath everlasting life.*" He "*hath the Son,*" because his faith has applied to the Son. He hath life, because in the Son is "the life of men." He hath "*everlasting* life;" as he that hath the inexhaustible fountain, hath the endless stream. Is Christ our *righteousness,* wherein we are justified before God? Faith brings us to, and makes us partakers in, that righteousness. Is Christ our *sanctification,* whereby we are made meet for the presence of God? Faith brings us to, and makes us partakers in, that sanctification. And the union of those two is life, with God, and unto God—"life *everlasting;*" the same life precisely as that which saints made perfect enjoy in the immediate vision of God, and in the boundless bliss of his kingdom; except that here, it is the *stream,* begun and flowing on, impeded and obscured by the nature it flows in; but growing wider, and deeper, as it proceeds; while there, it is the ocean, without measure, and without impurity—the united life of all the saints of God, in their utmost perfectness of communion with his infinite fullness.

But we must mark more particularly, that the words of the text are in present time. They declare, that "he that believeth on the Son, *hath* everlasting life." The possession of life, in other words, is immediate on the possession

of faith. When the sinner believes with his heart, as soon as he so believes, he hath that life, that peace with God, that justification, that sanctification; yea, justification complete, because in that there can be no degrees or progression; but sanctification begun, as the morning light, and going on to the perfect day of holiness in heaven.

But the text contains as positive a declaration of the *present possession of the wrath of God by him who believeth not.* "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "*The wrath of God abideth*" NOW, on every one that hath not faith in Christ. He waits not for the day of judgment. He "is condemned already."* Does this seem a hard saying? But is it not the necessary result of these two facts, namely: that you have sinned against God, and that you have not embraced the only terms of his forgiveness? If I find a man under the power of a deadly disease, and tell him of one that can and will heal him, if he will only trust himself to his care; and then, when he will not do so, but prefers to trust the power of his own nature to overcome the malady, and so goes on to die, would it be strange, if I should say, because he will not put his trust in that physician, he cannot have life; but the power of death abideth on him?

A raging flood, we will suppose, has overflowed the land; a family, surrounded by the waters, has gathered to the last foothold; the tide is rapidly rising; soon they must be swept away. But see! a boat hastens to their relief. A rope is thrown, and a voice cries to them, "come away; seize the rope; trust its strength and we will save you." One grasps it eagerly, and is drawn aboard and rescued.

* John iii. 18.

The others hesitate, and linger, and look around for something else. They hope the waters will not rise any more. They will hope to be saved where they are. But now the moment of rescue is over—the boat can stay no longer. The flood increases, and takes them all away. And what is the most appropriate language concerning them? None better than that of the text: *He that believeth is saved; but they that believed not, cannot live, but the wrath of the flood abideth on them.* And what is this but, under another form, the precise case of those who believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ? They are sinners. They have therefore incurred the condemnation of God. They have come under his wrath. Have they ever obtained the removal of that wrath? The only Saviour has come to save them; has come near to them; has stretched out his hands unto them; has entreated them to embrace his salvation; but they have turned away from him; they will not rest their hearts upon his grace. What follows? Why, they remain, of course, just as they were; their sins unpardoned; their souls without peace. Let that unbelief, that neglect of Christ, go on to death, and they can never see life; but the wrath of God abideth on them forever and ever. Surely it is not wonderful, that, rejecting the *ark* you must abide the flood; that, neglecting to avail yourselves of the only salvation, you should remain the lost to all eternity.

But there is one thing to be noted here of great seriousness. The drowning man does not make the depth in which he sinks, any the deeper or more terrible, because he will not seize the hand extended to rescue him. But not so with the sinner, abiding and sinking under the con-

demnation of sin, and who yet neglects the great salvation which the wonderful love and grace of God have provided for him at so much cost, and pressed upon his acceptance with so much compassion. That neglect, though it be merely neglect, and rise not to a more positive rejection of Christ, is itself awful sin, covering the soul with guilt; enough of itself to ruin you forever; and consequently, to a dreadful extent, increasing the weight of the condemnation abiding already. This is not often considered by sinners in this unhappy state. What they forfeit by not taking refuge in Christ, they may sometimes think of. But what they get by that course, they do not consider. Not to accept Christ! What is it but to reject him? Take care, my hearers, that you understand this. No matter how confidently you may expect, sometime hereafter, to embrace Christ; the denial of your present love, and trust, and obedience, and devotedness to him, is nothing less than the present denial of Christ, in every practical sense; it is the practical denial, in your hearts, that you have any need of his grace; it is the turning away of your whole being from the tender compassion of him who "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all;" it is the deliberate taking away from Christ that heart, that life, which he hath purchased unto himself with his own blood, and saying you will not have him to reign over you. And can it be that the sinner does not come under a far heavier wrath of God for this; that if death had no sting but that one sin, it would not be enough to fill us with "the terrors of the Lord." Oh! what can He, who is to judge the quick and the dead, in the day when "he will bring every work into judgment,

with every secret thing," what can he then say to you so terrible, as that he, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, did come to seek and save your soul, by the sacrifice of himself, and you neglected so great salvation? Ah! that *denial of Christ*; what a denial *from* Christ must it meet, in "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God!" Escape ye, escape ye, while yet it is the day of salvation! Tarry not; the door of the ark is yet wide open, and the voice still speaks: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." Oh! blessed Spirit of Grace, help us to persuade them to enter while yet it is a day of grace and not of judgment—while it is the blood of the Lamb to take away sin that is proclaimed, and not as it soon will be "the wrath of the Lamb," to banish all hope forever! Look at the fullness, the freeness, the preciousness of the salvation in Christ to which ye are so earnestly called; and say, sinners, say, *why will ye die?*

SERMON XII.

FAITH APPROPRIATING THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST.

JOHN vi. 53, 54.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

THOSE among you who are familiar with the New Testament will remember several verses connected with the text, in which our Lord, in different forms, uttered the same declaration as that here given. All of them pronounce very strongly on the necessity that, in some sense or other, we should *eat his flesh and drink his blood*, if we would attain eternal life. Such an emphatic use of terms, so remarkably strong and striking, must be supposed to indicate some very essential doctrine concerning the way by which we are to partake in the benefits of the Saviour's death. It is the object of this discourse to make that doctrine plain, and to make such application of it as our Lord intended.

Now the first question is: Did he use the words "except ye eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man," in *a literal*, or *in a figurative and spiritual sense?* One or the other was his sense, of course. Which are we to take?

The Jews who heard him utter them understood him in the *literal* sense, and therefore murmured at the requisition, and said, "*How can this man give us his flesh to eat?* Those literal interpreters of the Saviour's words have not wanted followers among Christians. Ever since it became necessary in the Church of Rome to find scripture-warrant for her monstrous doctrine of transubstantiation, which teaches that, under the consecrating act of a priest, the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper are changed into the very substance of the body and blood of Christ, so that the communicant *literally* eats the flesh and drinks the blood of his Saviour's body which is in heaven; ever since that doctrine became the established faith of the Church of Rome,* it has been a great point with its advocates to take sides with the interpretation of the Jews, and to urge as necessary to salvation, the most literal obedience to the Saviour's words. Grant them that meaning of the text, and then, since their transubstantiation of the elements in the Eucharist is the only method that even pretends to furnish the means of our literal compliance, the bearing upon their favorite dogma is manifest.

But, unfortunately for the conclusiveness of all the argument they would raise from that source, you must first believe the doctrine that is to be proved, before you can believe in that literal interpretation as its evidence. If you have first established the matter of fact, that under the visible forms of bread and wine in the sacrament, we have in material reality the actual flesh and blood of Christ; then, as there is thus a way by which we may literally eat that flesh and drink that blood, it becomes

* Which was not till the Lateran Council, A. D. 1215.

possible, that our Lord, in the words before us, intended to be literally understood, and possible, therefore, that he had the transubstantiation of the sacramental elements in view. But, on the other hand, if you suppose the only method ever dreamed of, by which to comply with the literal sense, to be not proved, then you abandon all that can possibly vindicate that sense from the charge of perfect unreasonableness; since, in the absence of positive evidence to the contrary, it is not reasonable to suppose that the Saviour could have made absolutely essential to our salvation, the most impracticable thing we can conceive of.

It is singular that any can adopt the literal interpretation, after the express denial put on it by our Lord himself. When some of his Jewish hearers thus understood him, "they strove among themselves" in their revolt at such a requisition, and exclaimed, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat!" Many of his disciples said, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?" Jesus knew that they murmured, and said, "Doth this offend you? It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."* Thus did he expressly rebuke their literal and carnal understanding of his words; telling them distinctly and pointedly, that "the flesh" which they understood him to mean, *namely, his* flesh, so taken, would profit them nothing, even if they could all literally eat it, that he was speaking of no such carnal appropriation of him to the saving of their souls; that it was *the spirit* — a *spiritual* participation of him; which alone could profit them

* John vi. 63.

with God; that his words were to be taken in that spiritual sense, and only when so taken would they be words of life to the souls of men.

What we are to understand by that true *spiritual* sense of the Saviour's words, so misunderstood by those who heard him, we will consider directly. But at present, inasmuch as the peculiar language of the text is so similar to that of the Lord's Supper, that many take it for granted that the latter is directly referred to in the former, and thus the passage seems, at least, to countenance the Romish dogma of transubstantiation, we will first briefly inquire whether the direct and primary reference, in the words of the text, and in the connected and similar language of other verses in this chapter, is to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper; or in other words, whether it is only in the reception of that sacrament that we find the mode of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man, to which the text refers.

We have no idea that, in the words before us, our Lord had any direct reference to the *sacrament* of his body and blood. We have no doubt indeed, that between the words of the text and the whole signification of that sacrament, there is one common subject and reference of unspeakable importance — namely, the death of Christ, as our life, and the necessity of receiving in our hearts, by faith, a crucified Saviour, and of living on him by faith, as our bread of life, daily and hourly. What the one teaches in words, the other teaches in symbols; what in the text is expressed by figures of speech, is expressed in the sacrament by tangible signs and forms. The text and the ordinance are thus related together by the bond of a common

meaning, but in no other way. They meet at the cross. They are fulfilled in the same act of the believer's faith, by which he lives upon Christ for life eternal. The sacrament refers to the text, and to all such like declarations of scripture, as containing the essence of its spiritual meaning; but that in the words of the text there was any direct or primary reference to the subsequent institution of the sacrament, we think is without evidence; and, for reasons which we proceed to give, should be strenuously denied.

First. When our Lord declared the necessity of our eating his flesh and drinking his blood, if we would have eternal life, not only was the sacrament of the supper not instituted, but even his nearest disciples had not received the least hint of his intention to appoint it; nor was there anything to suggest it to them, in any institution with which they were acquainted. Consequently, it was perfectly impossible that they should have understood him, if the receiving of that sacrament was the duty in view. Nothing more perfectly unintelligible in their circumstances, even to minds the most ready to learn and believe, can be imagined. The bare announcement to them of an intention to institute that sacrament, would have furnished the key to his words, had they referred thereto. So that, on the supposition of that being their reference, it is not easily accounted for, that so much as even a hint of that intended institution was withheld. Nor is it any more explicable that St. John, who alone of all the Evangelists gives the conversation before us, should be the only one to omit all account of the explanatory institution of the sacrament; his narrative alone presents the difficulty

to be solved, and his alone omits the necessary explanation. To those who, in his days, and afterwards, had no gospel but his, as no doubt was the case with many, a conversation was stated, on the understanding of which, as containing a duty, eternal life depends; and that conversation referred, for the only mode of understanding and fulfilling the duty, to the institution of a certain sacrament, and yet of that institution not a word is given by St. John. So improbable an omission of so necessary a key, is strong evidence that the conversation had no primary reference to that sacrament.

I know it is answered, that "our Saviour said many things to the Jews which neither they nor his disciples could understand when they were spoken, though his disciples understood them after he was risen." But none of those cases were parallel to that before us. If unintelligible till the resurrection or its connected events explained them, they were not necessarily revolting to all minds until so explained. But here is a declaration, an action required as essential to salvation, which, until explained, must, of necessity, have occasioned a painful revolt and the most dangerous perplexity in all minds, and which therefore demanded immediate explanation. Such explanation, *according to our view of the Saviour's meaning of eating his flesh*, &c., *was* given in all that he had just said of *believing on him as the bread of life;* and it was more particularly furnished as soon as it appeared that that previous interpretation had not been taken. It was given when Jesus said, "It the *spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing.* The words that I speak unto you, *they are spirit,* and they are life." But if the refer-

ence of our Lord could only be understood by a knowledge of the eating and drinking in a sacrament not then in being, not only were his hearers utterly unable to comprehend his meaning, but his words must necessarily have been to them most painfully perplexing and stumbling; they must have felt that an action was required, as essential to the salvation of all men, which, so far as they could understand it, was utterly impossible to all men.

Secondly. If we suppose our Lord to have had, in the words before us, a direct reference to the Eucharist, as the only mode of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, we make him then to have assigned to that sacrament an absolute necessity to the very being of spiritual life in us, which the creed of no portion of the Christian Church has ever maintained. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," would thus mean, *except ye partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, ye have no life in you;* no spiritual life, even in its weakest state; no regeneration by the Holy Ghost, no resurrection from the death of sin, no salvation. But even the Romanists, who exceed all others in the stress laid on the necessity of sacramental participation, cannot go to that extent. According to them, every baptized child, though he may not yet for many years partake in the Eucharist, is spiritually born again, and hath in him the divine life in its fullest reality. And, in the view of all Protestant churches, whoever truly repents of his sins, and believes with the heart in Christ, is thus a partaker of the life that is in Christ Jesus, though he may not yet have had the opportunity of confirming it in the believing reception of the Lord's Supper. And the scriptures

expressly assure us, in words pronounced long before that sacrament was known, that "he that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life;" * making the life to depend, not on the sacrament, but simply on *faith*.

Thirdly. It appears from all the conversation of our Lord with which the words before us are connected, that when he urged the duty and necessity of eating his flesh, &c., and when he declared that without it his hearers had no life in them, he was urging a duty which *could then be performed*, and was warning them of a destitution which *could then be obviated*. Where was the propriety of saying, "The bread of God is he that cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world;" "he that cometh to me, shall never hunger;" "he that eateth of this bread shall live forever;" "my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;" † why should our blessed Lord have exhorted his hearers to labor after that very meat, (v. 27) if it were not then prepared — if it were not then attainable — if the institution of the sacrament, which did not take place till a year after, was necessary to make it attainable? Some of those who heard the exhortation, would die before that year would arrive. That meat was essential to their salvation; without it, they could have no spiritual life; and yet, if it was the reception of the Lord's Supper that was referred to, they could not possibly obtain it — they must die without it.

The whole tenor of the chapter from which we have selected the text compels us to understand, that, as in the first sentence of the text, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in

* John iii. 36. † John vi. 33, 35, 51, 55.

you," our Lord is speaking of a necessity as universal as the nature of fallen man; so, in the second sentence, "Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life," he is speaking of a remedy equally universal and applicable; one which depends not on any outward circumstance, institution, or privilege, which a believer may, or may not, possess; but is accessible wherever Christ is known, and his word received. Its chosen type was the Manna. "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die."* But it was remarkably the attribute of that bread in the wilderness, that it was alike accessible to all that needed it. Priestly intervention had nothing to do with its preparation or distribution. Priests obtained it no more easily, or directly, or abundantly, under no more privilege, of any sort, than the meanest of the people. The family of Aaron was treated, in regard to the common bread of Israel, not as the sacerdotal family, but simply as a portion of the dependent people of God. It was before the appointment of the sacramental rites of the ceremonial law that the manna was first given, and its ordinance appointed; and when the ceremonial law brought in its priesthood, and sacrifices, and sacramental institutions, no change was made in the universal freeness of the manna; in its perfect independence of all sacramental, all sacerdotal agency, in its being the unrestricted common bread of all the people of God alike. So it continued until the host had crossed the Jordan, and exchanged the bread of the wilderness for "the new corn" of the promised land. And such is our Lord's chosen type of

* John vi. 49, 50.

his flesh and blood, as the living bread from heaven, without which we cannot have eternal life. A type which, as it stands connected with the whole chapter before us, compels us to understand, by the Saviour's flesh and blood, a food of life, which, though it be represented under the visible elements of the Lord's Supper, and though certainly received by the believing heart in that sacrament, is not confined to the reception of sacraments; is tied to no external institution; is dependent on no priesthood or ministry of man; comes not by the intervention of human hands, nor can be prevented from reaching the needy by any human will; a bread of which no persecution, no poverty, no banishment from the visible ordinances of the the Church, can deprive the true believer; a "bread of God" which is not obtained and eaten only in the sanctuary and at certain special times, but, like the manna, is to be our *daily* bread; obtained and eaten at home, as well as at Church; by the faith of the Christian in his daily duties, in the household and in his business, as really and as freely, as while participating in the solemnities of the sanctuary; a bread which he will obtain, abundantly, not in any proportion to his outward ecclesiastical privileges, but simply in proportion as he feels his need of it, and comes in his heart's faith to Christ to obtain it. It is a bread, not of the Christian dispensation merely, but of all dispensations, from the fall of man to the judgment day, because the need of it is peculiar to none. It is that which unites the whole blessed company of the people of God, of all generations, in one spiritual communion and fellowship, whether they be in earth or heaven; their Saviour, their life, their joy, being the same; as it is written: "They

did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and *that Rock was Christ.*"*

You will readily perceive, in these remarks, the interpretation I put on the words of the text. By the flesh and blood of Christ, which we must receive, I understand *Christ himself.* We must receive *him* as our life, according to the connected verse: "He that eateth *me*, even he shall live by me." (v. 57.) And if you ask, then, why his *flesh and blood* are so particularly mentioned, I answer, because it is *as having been once offered up on the cross*, a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, that we are to receive our Saviour; Christ *crucified*—Christ as having been "*wounded*," under the sword of the law, "for our transgressions;" as having poured out his precious blood for the remission of our sins. We must always keep that great sacrifice, of which his flesh and blood were the constituents, in the eye and embrace of our faith. And then again, by *eating* that flesh and *drinking* that blood, I understand simply that *habitual exercise of earnest faith* in Christ as the propitiation for our sins in his death, and as our unfailing life, now that he hath ascended to the right hand of the Father Almighty, whereby we come to him, trust in him, appropriate his benefits to our souls, and live on the daily supplies of his grace; that faith which finds its strongest *expression* in the sacramental eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper, and of which the natural faith that takes us to our daily meals, and makes us eat our daily bread, and drink our daily cup for the sustenance of natural life, is the strongest and most familiar resemblance.

In confirmation of this interpretation of our Saviour's

* 1 Cor. x. 3–4.

language in the text, let me beg you to observe in the chapter before us, a remarkable mingling of expressions entirely *literal*, with others highly *figurative*; both sets of expressions evidently referring to the same act on our part towards Christ, as necessary to salvation, and intended to explain one another. For example—said our Lord: "This is the work of God, that ye *believe* on Him whom he hath sent." (v. 29.) "He that *believeth* on me hath everlasting life." (v. 47.) This is all literal. All is suspended on faith. Then comes the figurative. "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." (v. 51.) Here, what was before expressed under the literal *believing in Jesus*, is now found under the figure of *eating his flesh*. The two are evidently one, for each equally attains eternal life.

But again, said the Lord: "This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and *believeth* on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (v. 40.) This is the literal. Believing on Christ is here the great essential to salvation. Then the figurative, precisely parallel: "Whoso *eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood*, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (v. 54.) You cannot fail to see how precisely these two passages are speaking of the same act on our parts, just as they speak of the same eternal blessings consequent upon it. Believing is the literal; eating and drinking are the figurative. Eternal life, and being raised up at the last day, are the results of both.

But we perceive the same yet more manifestly, in a verse of the same discourse of our Lord, in which the literal and figurative are mixed together: "*He that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*" (v. 35.) Here, the *believing* in Christ is so associated with the *hungering* and *thirsting*, and consequently with *eating* and *drinking*, all having direct reference to Christ, that we cannot doubt it was our Lord's intention to use the expressions, *coming unto him*, *believing on him*, and *eating his flesh*, &c., only as various modes of declaring the same great truth; namely, the absolute necessity, and the saving efficacy, of a living faith, to bring us into vital union with Christ, according to the testimony of John the Baptist: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."*

But here I can easily suppose you to say, Is there not something very unnatural—a use of figurative language exceedingly forced and extravagant, in speaking of the simple act of faith in Christ, as if it were *an eating of his flesh, and a drinking of his blood?*

We answer, that modes of expression, which, when detached from their context, seem most unnatural and forced, often appear the reverse when seen in their proper place, with all the connections and circumstances of the discourse around them. Let us see if the language before us does not illustrate this remark.

Our Lord had just fed the five thousand, by the miraculous multiplication of the five loaves and the two fishes.

* John iii. 36.

In consequence of that miracle, a great multitude followed him. Knowing their motive, he said to them: "Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracle, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you. (v. 26 and 27.) Having thus, from the recent distribution of temporal food, naturally and easily introduced the sustenance of our spiritual life, under the figurative expression of the "*meat* which endureth unto everlasting life," he is next led, by his hearers having adverted to the *manna* which their fathers ate in the wilderness, to speak of "the true bread from heaven," of which that manna was the type. (v. 31-35.) The next step was to say, that he himself was that true bread of God, "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life." And then, since he became that life to us, only by giving his flesh and blood as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, the transition was easy and natural, from saying, "I am the living bread," to saying, "the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world;" (v. 51.) and thence again to saying, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." (v. 55.) And next, as he had just before spoken of believing in him, as the way by which sinners are to participate in the benefits of the sacrifice of his flesh and blood, there was an easy step to the representation of that believing, by the figure of *eating his flesh and drinking his blood.*

Thus we have reached the height of the figurative language of the text by an easy gradation, from step to step, till what, if introduced without such preliminaries,

would have seemed unnatural, appears in connection with them, only appropriate to, and consistent with, the whole preceding discourse.*

And now having seen the appropriateness of the language before us, and its true interpretation, let us devote the remainder of our time to the consideration of the practical lessons it teaches.

1st Let us observe *the eminent, the unequalled, prominence* in which *the death* of Christ is here placed before our hearts, for the daily contemplation of our faith.

At first, our Saviour only said, "I am the bread of life." But next he said, "The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Why this particular mention of his flesh and his blood, as if, in being our

*For a truly able and learned treatise on the language of the text, and the whole connected discourse of our Lord, with reference to the support of the views maintained in the above discourse, and in reply to those of Cardinal Wiseman, in his book on the Eucharist, see the Essay of the Rev. Dr. Turner, the learned Professor of Biblical Literature in the Gen. Theol. Sem. of the P. E. Ch., (published by the Harpers, N Y.,) entitled, "*Essay on our Lord's discourse at Capernaum,*" (12 mo.) In connection with the above consideration of the strength of the figurative language of the text, &c., the reader will do well to see what Dr. Turner has produced, (pp. 82—94,) from the scriptures and from Jewish writers, showing that such language was current among the people whom our Lord addressed. I confine myself to a single passage from the Babylonish Talmud, as quoted by Dr. Turner: "Rabbi Hillel says, Not for them, for Israel, is Messiah; for a long time ago *they ate him*, in the days of Hezekiah." On which passage, Dr. Lightfoot, that great Master-critic, makes the following observations: "Behold, *eating the Messiah*, and yet no complaints upon the phraseology. Hillel is indeed blamed (in the Talmud,) for saying that the Messiah was so eaten that he will no longer be for Israel; but *on the form of speech not the slightest scruple is expressed.* For they clearly understood what was meant by the *eating of the Messiah*; that is, that in the days of Hezekiah they became *partakers of the Messiah, received him with avidity, embraced him joyfully, and, as it were, absorbed him;* whence he was not to be expected at any future period."—Dr. Turner's Essay, p. 68.

bread of life, they were to be separated, one from another? Why would it not suffice to have spoken of himself, in the integrity of his human nature, as our living bread? We answer, because he desired to teach us, most impressively, that the great event by which he *became* the bread of life, to all generations, as well to those before, as those after his crucifixion, was his *death*, when he offered himself as a propitiatory sacrifice to God; when his flesh was wounded, and his blood was poured out for the remission of sins; that it was not by coming in our nature, but by his becoming "*obedient unto death*" in that nature; not by his being sent forth from God, and "made of a woman, made under the law," "that he redeemed those who were under the law,"* but by enduring in his death the penalty of the law for them; not his incarnation, by which he became man; not the example and teaching of his perfect life, whereby he became the guide of man; but his *death*, wherein he completed his obedience as our surety, and paid our debt to a violated law, and brought us nigh to God, "that we might receive the adoption of sons."

He desired to teach, in a manner too impressive to be forgotten, that the great objective event in Christianity, around which the whole system of our faith is concentrated; that which, like the brazen serpent, lifted up on high for all that were dying among the Israelites to behold, should be ever the most exalted and the most distinctly in the view of our faith, is "Christ *crucified;*" Christ who indeed "was made man," but that he might *die* for man; Christ, who being without sin in his life, was in his death "made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God

* Gal. iv. 4-6.

in him."* The ripe corn is not prepared to be our bread, till it is broken, and has endured the fire. Jesus became not the bread of life to dying man, but by being "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;" by enduring the "consuming fire" of the wrath of God in our stead. The Atonement! the Atonement! that "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world," is the central point, the great objective event, in Christianity. There our faith must fix its trust. There our hope must abide as its refuge. Oh! how little we know of believing in Jesus; how little we have really learned of what he is to sinners, if we have not learned thus to lift up in our hearts a *crucified* Saviour, Jesus, *in his death*, as the great light of our life and joy of our hope. His "flesh is meat indeed," his "blood is drink indeed," when thus contemplated and received. Hence, though St. Paul appreciated as thankfully and devoutly as any man that ever lived, every event in the Saviour's earthly mission, he did not say, God forbid that I should glory, save in the *incarnation* of our Lord Jesus Christ, or save in his holy example and unexampled teaching. But what did he say? "God forbid that I should glory, save in the *cross* of our Lord Jesus Christ."† And when he would designate the great burden of his preaching and that of his brother Apostles, it was not, "We preach Christ in the several steps of his mission, from the day of his being born of a virgin, to the moment when he ascended into the heavens; though all, of course, received at their hands the rightful attention; but it was, "We preach *Christ crucified.*"

* 2 Cor. v. 21. † Gal. vi. 14.

Precisely of the same tenor is the teaching of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is the visible preaching of *Christ crucified*, the visible glorying of the communicant only in the *cross of Christ*. "*As often* (said the Apostle,) *as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*"* The Lord's *death!* Why should we so especially show forth his death, rather than his wonderful birth and works? Was it not Jesus *living* in the perpetual manifestation of a perfect holiness, and surrounded on every side with his miraculous works of love, that most commended his mission to the acceptance of the world? And was it not Jesus *dying* on the cross, not delivered from an ignominious death either by his own power, nor that of the Father, that seemed the greatest offense of his mission, in the sight of the world; "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness?" And yet it is Jesus *dying and dead on the cross*, in all the deep humiliation and ignominy, the mocking and scoffing of the crucifixion, that is chosen as the event to be held up and showed forth by the whole Christian Church, in this its solemn and only repeated sacrament, by all generations, till the Saviour comes again! Why is this? Why was no sacrament appointed for the special commemoration of some other event in the mission of Christ? Why, when the household of faith is gathered together to keep, under the form of the sacramental supper, the feast of their Saviour's love, and to commemorate his death, why is nothing exhibited on the table but symbols of his flesh and blood? Why are those symbols exhibited only in the form of bread, the type of all nourishment, and of

* 1 Cor. xi. 26.

wine, the type of all refreshment and joy? Why is that table, with that its simple furniture, so indispensable to the very being of the *visible* church; so that in every congregation, in every land, by every believer, before all the world, till the second appearing of our Lord, there must be so frequently repeated that solemn, sacramental showing forth of his death, as if, in some sense, our all were centered there, as if our glorying were all to be there, as if that were the banner under which the whole Christian host must be marshalled? Why, but to teach in the strongest manner, and to keep before the Church and the world, in the utmost prominence and impressiveness, these two momentous truths, namely, that of all events in the Saviour's work on earth, the sacrifice offered in his death for our sins, must be our refuge, our hope, our glory, the strength of our salvation, the song of our praise; and that that sacrifice must be received and appropriated by a living faith to our several necessities as our daily bread of life, or else our hope is vain, and we are yet in our sins? What is it all, but just, in another form, the teaching of our text: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you?" And what is the object of the very strong and remarkable language of the text, but to do in words what the sacrament does in visible symbols, namely, to make those two great vital truths as conspicuous and impressive as possible?

2nd. Let us observe also *the impressive light in which the nature and operation of faith* are represented in the text.

The corporeal act of eating our daily food is chosen by our Lord to illustrate what faith is in its relations to him;

what it implies, what it does, and what is its absolutely essential relation to all spiritual life in us. The believer is represented as coming to Christ, as the hungry and perishing come to an abundant banquet. Faith expects not to partake of that feast by merely knowing it has been provided, or by standing away and looking thereat and acknowledging the grace that gave it, confessing that Christ has come in the flesh and has died for our sins; but only by actual *appropriation* of the sacrifice of Christ, and all the benefits connected therewith, to the deep necessities of the soul.

Such faith implies *a sense of great spiritual want and an earnest desire* after those very supplies which are found in Christ.

We do not ordinarily partake of food but when we feel the need of it. We hunger, and therefore eat. No man ever came to Christ in a saving faith, to take and live by that bread of life, saying in his heart, "*Lord, evermore give me that bread,*" who was not first brought to feel that without it he must die in his sins, and in whose heart there had not been created so strong a desire after just such grace as is treasured in Christ for sinners, that he was importunate to get to him, and felt there was no peace or life with God, till he had found him.

Again, it is implied in the text that a saving faith makes *a personal, individual appropriation* of Christ, to the case of each believer, bringing all that his death obtained, into direct application to the sinner's wants.*

It is not by believing that there is bread for us, that it benefits us; but by acting on our belief and eating of the

* "Thy words were found, and I did *eat* them." Jer. xv. 16.

bread. We do not derive nourishment and strength from food prepared for us, however graciously, and abundantly, and freely, but by receiving it, and digesting it, till it becomes distributed, in its several parts, to all the functions of our bodies, as each has need, and becomes incorporated in a living union with us, as bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

Thus does a living, saving faith, receive and appropriate Christ. Thus does it make his "flesh meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed," using him as the soul's *bread*. It receives *Christ crucified* as the one only, and the one "perfect and sufficient, oblation and satisfaction" for our sins. It receives him in all the offices he sustains to us, in all the saving mercies that flow from the perpetual presentation of his sacrifice before God on high; it receives him as still bearing towards us all the love that brought him to die for us, and as ready to fulfill all the promises which that love has made to us; it digests all in prayerful meditation, and in the believing use of, and reliance on all; it appropriates and distributes all, in the several parts thereof, to the several affections, and principles, and duties, and trials, of the Christian life, as each hath need; it incorporates all, as living bread, into personal, vital union with the inner man, as the very *being*, as well as the only sustenance, of our Christian life. The heart is thus fed and grows in grace. The love of God in Christ becomes in our hearts more and more supreme and constraining, sin more abhorred and feared, the world more overcome, the mind more spiritual, strength for every conflict with temptation, zeal for every labor in the service of God, increased—all our affections more strongly set

"on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Again, the language of the text implies that such is the *daily, the habitual operation* of a saving faith. When the Israelites lived upon the manna in the desert, it was the bread of every day. It came daily; it had to be gathered and eaten daily; they could not keep it for the morrow. Each day must have its own gathering and receiving. So is Christ, whom that manna represented. He is provided for daily wants, and must be appropriated daily and habitually. There is no place where a believer can be in this wilderness, that he may not find there "that bread which cometh down from heaven, so that he may eat thereof and not die;" and there is no day or hour in this wilderness when the believer should not, and has not need to take of that bread.

Saving faith does not wait for the sacramental signs and pledges of the sacrifice of Christ, before it will take of that sacrifice. Its language of praise at all times, is, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore, *let us keep the feast.*" It is a feast upon the sacrifice once offered for all—a feast then begun, ever since continued in every believing heart, now going on everywhere, as sinners live by faith in Christ and his sacrifice. This bread of God enters into, and is necessary to, our spiritual life each hour and moment. So must we receive it. It is the nourishment of the daily secret prayer that asks for it. It is the nourishment of the habitual faith that receives and appropriates it. It is the bread that feeds our love and thankfulness, when we go to express our dependence on it, and our gratitude for it, and to seek

more of it in the sacrament by which it is represented. We must take and eat of it before we approach its sacramental table, or else we shall be dead while we sit there. We cannot feed on Christ "by faith with thanksgiving" in the sacrament, except we have already begun to live on him by faith with thanksgiving, in our daily walk.* The life that we live in the flesh, if it be a Christian life, if it be the life that is hid with Christ in God, must be "*a life of faith* on the Son of God," the habitual coming of our hearts to Christ.

And now, in conclusion, let me speak more particularly concerning that holy sacrament in which we are to commune to-day.

In the early part of this discourse, it was said that in the words of the text, speaking of the necessity of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, there is no direct primary reference to *the sacrament* of his flesh and blood; that the text and the sacrament speak, in different ways, precisely the same language, and enforce

* Our Church, in the 3d Rubric of the Office for the Communion of the Sick, says: "If a man, by reason of extremity of sickness, * * or any other just impediment, do not receive the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, the minister shall instruct him that if he do *truly repent* him of his sins, and *steadfastly believe*, &c., he *doth eat and drink the body and blood of Christ to his soul's health, although he do not receive the sacrament with his mouth.*" Jerome says: "We are fed with the body of Christ, and we drink his blood, not only *in mystery*, (in the sacrament,) but also in the knowledge of holy scripture." The like language is common in the writings of the early fathers. Our 28th article says: "The body of Christ is given, taken and received in the supper, *only after an heavenly and spiritual manner*. And the *mean* whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper, is *faith*." The 29th article says: "The wicked, and such as be void of a lively faith, although they do visibly and carnally press with their teeth the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, yet *in no wise are they partakers of Christ*." How prominent, throughout our communion office, is faith, as essential to partaking in Christ, in the sacrament!

precisely the same lesson. They are related to one another by a common meaning and object. What one expresses in signs of words, the other expresses in the signs of bread and wine, and in our eating and drinking of the same. But we think it of great importance to keep distinctly before you the truth, that what the text expresses and requires, is not *fulfilled* in the mere carnal reception of the bread and wine in the sacrament; nor is so *confined* to the sacrament, however spiritually received, that it can not go on, and must not go on, away from it, as truly as in it; in the daily exercise of a living faith, in our secret prayers, in our retired meditations, in reading and hearing the word of God, in a continual resting of our souls upon the all-sufficiency of our ever-living and ever-present Saviour.

But in being thus emphatic here, we are exceeding far from teaching, that therefore, to obey our Lord's solemn command, by partaking of the *sacrament* of his death, and receiving therein, spiritually, by faith, his flesh and blood, is needless, or is not a most precious privilege and a most bounden duty, which cannot be neglected without peril to the soul. Though there be other means of grace whereby we may partake in the same benefits, this is *the* means in which all others are combined and intensely concentrated. It is emphatically "*the* communion." Though elsewhere, and at all times, it is the believer's privilege to hold communion with his blessed Lord, "in the fellowship of his sufferings," in the participation of the precious benefits of his passion; there are here helps to faith, incitements to love, pledges of grace, and manifestations of our fellowship in Christ, and with one anoth-

er, which make the Supper of our Lord peculiarly precious and edifying to the believer. At other times, we partake more by ourselves, each in the unseen prayer of his heart, in the exercise of his hidden, habitual faith. Our "fellowship one with another," in our common Lord and life, is not so distinctly expressed. We are "one body in Christ," but even in our usual public worship and common prayer of the Lord's day, our oneness is not so impressively and delightfully written on all we do. But when we gather around the simple table of our Lord's redeeming love, all taking of that same bread, all drinking of that same cup, all looking through those visible signs to the great sacrifice which they represent, all lifting up our hearts to him "who was dead and is alive again," and who ever liveth—the life and salvation of all that seek him; all saying, in every act of that communion, that they come only to Christ, and desire none but Christ, and him crucified, as their hope and refuge, their life and all;—oh! in that gathering together of believers to that one table, not as merely in the one house of worship where *we* may happen to be, but as taking place in union with us, in so many thousands of assemblies of the people of God in various lands, all thus united in showing "the Lord's death until he come;" then do we express, then do we feel, then do we rejoice in, "*the communion of saints*," in our union together in the common hope, and the common life, and the common salvation, of Christ; then is the love of the brethren quickened, and the love of the Lord of the household increased in our hearts, when thus we feel that we are marching together, as one host, under one head, to one conquest and home, showing out upon our banner

"*the Lord's death,*" and each saying, in every act, "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" *

But, my dear brethren, precious as that sacrament is, it is but a *sacrament*, a mere sign without grace, a dead sign, if the receiver's heart be so dead as not to have the living faith, by which to get within and mount above the visible sign, and commune in spirit with an unseen Christ. What if I should tell you that the mere receiving the *words* of my text into your ears, without faith to appropriate their doctrine to your souls, would convey to you the benefits of the body and blood of Christ? Who would credit such an assurance? But why should you any more believe that the mere receiving into your mouths the signs in the Lord's Supper, without faith to go from them to Christ, will make you partakers in any benefit of his passion? Are not the words of the text as really signs of saving truth in Christ, and as divinely given, as those of the sacrament? Are not the signs in the sacrament as truly words for us to read, as the words in the text? And if the word *preached*, in the sermon, will not profit except it be mixed with *faith* in them that hear it,

* What I would express in regard to the special preciousness of the Lord's Supper as a means of receiving Christ by faith, is very happily given in a sermon by Bradford, the martyr: "Though in the field a man may receive Christ's body by faith, in the meditation of his word, yet deny I that a man doth ordinarily receive Christ's body by the only meditation of Christ's death, or hearing his word, with so much light, and with such sensible assurance, as by the receipt of the sacrament. Not that Christ is not as much presented in his word preached, as he is in or with his sacrament, but because there are in the reception of the sacrament more windows open for Christ to enter into us, than by his word preached or read. For there (I mean in the word) he hath an entrance into our hearts, but only by the ears, through the voice and sound of words; but here in the sacrament, he hath an entrance by all the senses." —*On the Lord's Supper.*

no more will the word *exhibited* in the signs of the sacrament, except it be mixed with faith in them that receive it. To him that hears the written word of truth and life, without faith inwardly to digest and appropriate it, it is but a minister of condemnation. To him who receives the *sacramental* words of the same truth and life, in the same deadness, the same condemnation must ensue. We must go to the Supper of our Lord, to the household feast of his family and brethren, not to be made his, but to profess that we are his, and to be made more entirely his; to have a life, already begun in faith, strengthened and refreshed. It is a table for the living, not for the dead—for members of the Lord's family; not for those also who may only in name and form belong thereto. "Judge therefore yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord. Repent ye truly for your sins past; have a lively and steadfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men: so shall ye be meet partakers of those holy mysteries."

SERMON XIII.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD AS MANIFESTED IN CHRIST.

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1 JOHN iv. 8, 9.

"He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

"GOD is Love." What an engaging representation of the Most High! How simple, how comprehensive! Where, but in his own inspired word, is there to be found such a declaration of his essential nature? Many other oracles have said, God is almighty, all-wise, infinite in goodness, &c.; but it remained for his own book to say, "*God is Love.*"

This declaration occupies the central position of the text. What precedes, is inferred from it: "*He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.*" What follows, is its chief manifestation: "*In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son,*" &c. We will consider, *first*, the central truth; *seeondly*, its chief manifestation; and *thirdly*, the inferences from it.

I. The central declaration of the text—"*God is Love.*"

It is a comprehensive expression for the whole nature of God; not for a single attribute, but for the sum and harmony of all his attributes. You read in the scriptures,

very often, that God is holy, but never that God is holiness; that he is just, but never that he is justice; that he is merciful, but never that he is mercy. Holiness, and justice, and goodness, and mercy, are severally, according to our feeble way of understanding and speaking of, God, the *attributes* of his nature. Neither of them can stand as a comprehensive expression for his nature itself, in its whole compass and perfectness. But, on the other hand, *love* is not an attribute of the divine nature, like holiness, wisdom, &c. It is that nature itself. It is the comprehension of all the moral attributes in their harmonious relations to one another.

There is a similar expression in the scriptures: "*God is Light.*"* It is but another aspect of the other. God is Light, as he is Love. The one is the figurative, the other the literal. We will employ the one expression to illustrate the other. The truth that God is *Light*, shall guide us in setting forth the truth that God is *Love*.

Now, you are well aware, in regard to light, in its pure, original state, as it comes, unchanged, from the face of the sun, that it is perfectly white. But you also know, that the moment you cause its ray to pass through a glass of a certain form, it is separated into seven varieties of color, and the white has all disappeared. You have all the beautiful shades of the rainbow, but nothing of the original aspect of the light. But by causing those several varieties of colored rays to fall upon another surface, you find they all disappear, and the original white is restored. And thus, it is perceived, that the whiteness of the solar ray, in its original state, is not an *attribute* of

* 1 John i. 5.

light, but is *the* light; not a mere variety or property which light exhibits, under certain circumstances, like the red, or blue, or violet, of the rainbow; but light itself, in its unbroken, primitive perfectness. Broken up and decomposed by the prism, its parts exhibit various colors. Those parts being recomposed, so as to make up the ray in its first integrity, there is no color remaining. The several hues which the decomposed light presents to our eyes, are its attributes, as we see it through a certain medium, or under certain conditions of imperfectness. But when light is seen in its purity and integrity, as the face of the sun delivers it, all colors are harmonized, merged, and lost in perfect white. "*God* is Light."

But you may justly ask, when does the light which comes from the sun ever descend to our eyes, unchanged? As it passes through the atmosphere, or is reflected from the innumerable surfaces on which it falls—the clouds, the grass, the flowers—it is everywhere in a degree decomposed, so that we are greeted on every side with the various colors which give so much beauty, and often so much terror, to the face of nature. Who, from such various exhibitions of colored light, would imagine that light, in its perfection, has no color? God is Light; and when you contemplate his character, as its several manifestations are given to our imperfect vision, through the glass of his works, his providence, and his word, that which we know is and must be of the most perfect simplicity, appears as if compounded of many qualities, or distinct properties, which we call *divine attributes*—as justice, goodness, wisdom, holiness, mercy; while to each there seems allotted a separate office in the divine dis-

pensations. Of these attributes, we speak and reason, as if they were not merely *aspects* in which the divine character appears to our infirm conceptions, who here, more than anywhere else, must "see through a glass darkly;" but as actually distinct properties, found as really in the nature of God, as in the language of man. We have obtained the habit of imagining these several attributes to be, not only real distinctions in God, as well as in our own minds, but so independent one of another, that in his dealings with men, he is sometimes seen in the exercise of a part, while the rest are not concerned; sometimes as a God of justice, but not, at the same time, and in the same act, just as much a God of mercy.

But what are these distinctions of justice, and mercy, and holiness, &c., under which we are obliged to speak and think of God? Do they really belong to him in that separate aspect, or only to our necessarily broken and confused conceptions of his nature? Do they exist in that boundless, uncreated light, as it is in God, or only as the atmosphere, and the clouds, and the several infirmities which hang around our moral vision, present him to our view? Are they not simply the effects of that process, which the revelation of the perfect unity and simplicity of the divine nature undergoes, in being necessarily conveyed through a language, or by manifestations, which man may read and comprehend? Certainly, it needs no argument to prove, that in God's infinitely simple and perfect nature, to whom there is no succession of time or of counsel, no change of will or thought, there can be no such distinction of attributes; as if sometimes it were an inflexible justice, to the exclusion of mercy, that de-

termined his ways, and sometimes it were a tender, compassionate mercy, that put justice aside, and took the reins of sovereignty, and guided his hand. "God is Light." All those several attributes under which the character of God appears, in being made visible to us, in the several revelations of his works, his providence, and his word, are harmonized and merged in the perfect unity and simplicity of the divine nature. "God is Love."

But you know, with regard to light, that you cannot produce the pure white of the sun's ray, without the presence and combination of every one of the several colors of the prism. It is the union of all, that causes all to disappear in a colorless light. Subtract either one of them, and you cannot make the perfect light. It is just as essential to the pure whiteness of the solar ray, that it contain the red of the fearful lightning, as that it shall contain the soft blue of the sky, and the grateful green that carpets the earth. And so it is in God, and his ways towards man. All his attributes—justice as well as mercy, wisdom as well as compassion, holiness as well as goodness, must be associated, and perfectly harmonized, in every procedure of his boundless administration, or else the perfect unity and simplicity of his nature are not preserved. Take away either, in any degree, and God is not Love. One may be manifest to *our vision*, and another concealed. Like the tints of the rainbow, one may be exhibited more strongly than another, but all must be there; all in the depths of the divine mind, concurring and harmonized. That which makes it so fearful a thing for an impenitent sinner "to fall into the hands of the living God," must be there, as well as all that which so

tenderly invites and encourages the contrite heart to draw near to God, through Jesus Christ, and repose all its sins and sorrows upon his grace; the stern hatred and condemnation of sin, whereby the unquenchable fire has been prepared for the ungodly, as well as the unsearchable riches of grace, which have laid up, in Christ Jesus, the glorious inheritance reserved for the righteous; all must be in God, and all must be present, and concurrent, and harmonized, in all his' dealings with us, whatever the *manifestation* to our infirm conceptions, or *God is not Love.*

II. Let us now consider that special *manifestation* of this character of God to which the text refers us.

"In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." Thus, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, that wonderful way of salvation provided in the incarnation of the Son of God in our nature, and in his death on the cross, as a sacrifice for our sins, is that grand manifestation, which, above all his ways and doings, declares that God is Love.

We are speaking now of the *manifestation.* God was Love, when he was known only as the Creator and Preserver of all things, as much as he is now, when we have the additional knowledge of him as "He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." But then the *manifestation* of his character was widely different. As long as God continued to see all things on earth to be "*very good,*" as his own hand had fashioned it; as long as sin had not entered into the world, defacing, and defiling, and transforming all things; and man still was holy, so that God, the Light of light, beheld his own per-

fections reflected unchanged in the transparent purity of all created things; then, of course, the attribute of justice, the same that now arms the penalty of his violated law with such fearful strength, was as much a perfection of his nature, and as much associated in all his works and ways, as it ever has been since. But because there was no sin then to be visited, no violated law to be vindicated, that justice lay all unseen in love, just as when there is no cloud in the firmament, that which at other times colors so deeply the sky, as if it were all a burning flame, lies unseen in the sun's unbroken rays. Precisely as it was with the justice of God, so was it with all his other attributes. Since there was no sin deserving punishment, there was no room for the manifestation of his mercy. It lay undistinguished in love. So was it with holiness. As there was no sin in man to exhibit the opposite of holiness in God, there was no contrast by which the holiness of God could be manifested. It lay undistinguished in love. There being no want to be relieved, nor suffering to be pitied, there was nothing to exercise the divine compassion. It lay undistinguished in love. And as man was then in the likeness of God, perfectly holy, there was towards him the continual manifestation of the love of God, in which all divine perfections were united, however merged and undistinguished. And because man was "made perfect in love," and all on earth was unpolluted by sin; heaven and earth, in point of moral atmosphere, were one. Therefore, the light of the countenance of the Creator passed unchanged into the mind of the creature. There was no interposing medium of human infirmities and sinfulness, no cloud of anger between man and his Maker,

through which the manifestations of God's character and will must pass, and by which they must be affected in getting to the view of the creature. Man was *love;* and thus he was capable of knowing God, and of reflecting in himself the perfect image of God, as he was, and is, and ever shall be—*Love.* And the garden of Paradise, where was held that perfect communion between man and God, which since the entrance of sin has never been renewed in this world; and where all the varieties of form and color were blended into one harmony of perfect loveliness, was it not a standing manifestation of the glory of God, saying always, "God is Love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."

But sin perverted all the relations between man and God. It brought guilt on the creature, and wrath from the Creator. Their communion was destroyed; man was alienated; and henceforth he beheld his Maker from the great distance to which sin had banished him, and through the infirmities and corruption of nature which it had entailed upon him. There was now a thick cloud between them, and all the manifestations of the character of God were through that cloud; so that, as when the sun shines through the storm and seems as if deprived of all light but that of a frowning tempest, the unchangeable God, as much Love as ever, appeared as if only justice and judgment were the habitation of his throne. But soon was established the covenant of grace. God promised his only begotten Son, through whom the sinner might again approach and hold communion with him, and through whom he would manifest himself to the sinner. Under that covenant we now behold "the light of the knowledge

of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ." Thus we are enabled to see that God is Love. But still there is so much in the world to call forth his character as just and holy, hating iniquity, and by no means clearing the guilty; a God of judgment, whose terrors we are earnestly exhorted to escape; that men are wont to read many of his doings, as if love were all removed far away from them, and as if their only testimony were to God's justice and holiness.

How fearful, for example, was his judgment, when in punishment of the wickedness that overspread the earth, he brought upon its whole population the waters of the deluge, and, with the exception of a single family, buried in one grave all mankind. Think of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; of the commanded extermination of the Canaanitish nations, under the sword of Israel; of the vengeance, which by famine, and pestilence, and sword, desolated the guilty Jerusalem, when the Romans were made God's instruments of visiting upon the Jews, the rejection of his Son.

Looking at such fearful dispensations without the accompanying light of the scriptures, we may see that God was just and holy; that the Judge of all the earth did right; but one is apt to feel that we must look elsewhere, if we desire to find the dispensation in which was fulfilled the declaration, "*God is Love.*" Such, however, is not the aspect in which it is our privilege and duty, under the light of the scriptures, to contemplate those proceedings. And the same with regard to that most appalling of all, the judgment of God upon the wicked in the last day, consigning them to a retribution which is never to end, "where

their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Surely, (it may be said,) though God is just in that retribution, you cannot say he is Love. Yes, it is our privilege under the revelation of his word, to pass in review all the most tremendous visitations of judgment that ever came on the earth; and to survey in anticipation, all that is yet to come upon man, in earth or in hell, and to declare that, not only in his own essential being, but in each of these manifestations, *God is Love.* Whatever its aspect to the individual recipient, still, in the relations of God to all intelligent beings inhabiting the whole universe, angels as well as men, over whom his government is exercised, and before whom it is to be honored; his sternest severity to transgressors, impenitent—the very judgment in which he is most fearfully "a consuming fire," is that in which, could we read it as it is, we should see that he is Love. Did we but see all these footsteps of his power and holiness, not as mere insulated parts of his ways, but in all their connections with the whole dominion of God, we should understand, not only that they are compatible with his character as declared in the text, but that, seeing what this world is, as a rebellious world, they are positively essential to that character.

And what matters it to our full belief of all this, if, while assured of it on the authority of the divine word, we should feel ourselves baffled in our utmost efforts to comprehend how it can be? Can we any better comprehend how all the diversified colorings of nature, from the delicate verdure of the grass of the field, to the glare of the lightning, and the blaze of devouring fire, are concerned in, and essential to the composition of the light of an

unclouded day, as it comes in all its transparent whiteness from the sun? Can we enter into the secrets of the light, any more than into the mysteries of that divine nature of which it is the scriptural similitude? If we believe the truths of philosophy in regard to the one, because we see them, little as we comprehend them; may we not believe the doctrines of the Gospel as to the other, when certified by the Spirit of truth in the holy scriptures? Surely, it is not wonderful that the very love of God to men and angels, should demand just such terrible judgments upon the wicked, and yet that we should be unable to see wherein the dire necessity lies. Consider how little we are capable of discerning the interior of anything; how we are only as children in the nursery, looking out upon the boundless empire of God, through a very little window, and that very obscure; that it is but just a corner of the map of his universal providence that is unrolled to our inspection, so that we see never but "parts of his ways," and cannot follow out a single line of the chart beyond our own position. In another world, under a more perfect revelation, that chart will be more unrolled. We shall see God as he is, if it be our happiness to inherit the blessedness of his kingdom. All his ways will then be vindicated. Then shall we see perfectly, what we now believe assuredly, how all his judgments, as well as all his mercies, praise him; how all the consuming fire that ever fell on man has praised him; how all the retribution poured upon lost souls in hell praiseth him; and how perfectly all his severest dispensations unite and harmonize with all his most compassionate and merciful, in adoring testimony that God is Love.

But far beyond all other manifestations of this precious truth, is that wonderful provision for the redemption of sinners, to which we are directed in the text. It is mentioned there as if it were the only manifestation; so far is it beyond all others, in the fullness and glory of its evidence. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him." The praises of the glorified Church in heaven are represented as being intensely concentrated upon that great gift of God's love, and on the great redemption wrought out by the atoning death of that only begotten Son, as if in its light, the saints "made perfect" were capable of seeing no other manifestation of God. They sing that "*new song;*" a song always new, because the theme is never exhausted: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."*

In accomplishing the salvation of sinners, the one great difficulty, if we may so speak, was to preserve the justice, and holiness, and truth, and faithfulness of God from all dishonor and all compromise with sin; to vindicate his violated law to the full exaction of its penalty; to manifest his own infinite holiness as a sin-hating God; and yet to open a way for the going forth of the unsearchable riches of his grace, for the free forgiveness and the everlasting blessedness of the repenting sinner. To provide salvation on any other terms, might have manifested compassion and mercy to the lost; but in such a salvation it could not have been said that God is Love. Such mercy to the guilty would have been any thing but love to the

*Rev. v. 9.

whole universe of intelligent and accountable beings. It is infinitely more important to the happiness of the universe, that the law of God shall be honored, and his faithfulness as a righteous Governor sustained, than that sinners should be saved.

In the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, wherein God hath laid on him the iniquities of us all, nothing is lost on his part in order that we may be saved. All the divine perfections are maintained and are glorified; all co-operate in entire harmony in that great salvation; yea, all are manifested and vindicated as never before in the ways of God. Never were his mercy and compassion so seen, as when heaven and earth beheld them in the working out our peace at such cost as the humiliation, and agony, and death of the only begotten Son of God. Never did he appear in such robes of justice and judgment, hating and punishing iniquity; abating not a jot or tittle of its curse; never was his holiness so seen, as when, rather than save sinners at the expense of his law, he saved them at the expense of his own Son, and delivered him up to be "made a curse for us." Ezekiel saw in a vision "the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord," and he says it was "*as the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain.*"* John had a similar vision; and says, like Ezekiel, "*there was a rainbow round about the throne.*"† It was a vision of the glory of God in the redemption of sinners by Christ, wherein all the divine perfections unite, and co-operate, and blend in beautiful harmony; wherein, while they constitute the most perfect assurance of salvation to every penitent and be-

* Ezek. i. 28. † Rev. iv. 3.

lieving sinner, they all bend, as one, around *the throne*, rendering all honor to the government of Him that sitteth thereon, as being only the more glorified, as the righteous Judge, in providing as a compassionate Father that free salvation.

III. And now let me turn your attention to *the inference* in the text from the character there given under the name of *Love*. "*He that loveth not, knoweth not God*, for God is Love." In other words, where there is not the love of God in the heart, there is no true knowledge of him. To know him truly, and to love him sincerely, must go together.

Indeed, it is a principle of general application, that we know nothing that is lovely, unless we love it. The absence of love is the absence of true knowledge. To know by the hearing of the ear, or to see, as a matter of fact, that, according to rule and the ordinary way of estimating things, an object deserves to be loved, is one thing; but it is a very different matter to know its loveliness by our own consciousness, by a personal appreciation and the testimony of our own affections. We know not the harmonies of music, however we may learn them as a thing of science, except our ear can receive and enjoy them. We know not the loveliness of a landscape, which the hand of nature has adorned with every beauty and grace, except there be in us that susceptibility, that sympathy of feeling, that love for it, without which we observe it not, and care not for it. We may know that it is lovely, because so it is said to be. But if we do not love it, we show that we do not know it, but by the hearing of the ear. And thus, since God is Love, and infinitely worthy to be loved by us, with all our hearts; if we love him not, there is the most

conclusive evidence that we do not even know him. That he is, and something of what he is, we may know. On the assurance of his word, or by the process of an argument, we may be certified, that he hath indeed a most just claim on all the love we have to give. But know him with the only knowledge that is owned as the knowledge of God in the scriptures, we cannot, unless we love him. "God is Light." The eye sees light, by first receiving it. "God is Love." The heart knows him, by loving him. With the understanding, we know that he is; but with the affections, we know *what* he is; and especially what he is as "the God of all grace," manifesting himself in the gift of his only begotten Son, that we might live through him.

Hence, you find in the scriptures, that the knowledge and the love of God are spoken of as identical. They whose hearts are not with him, are always described as those who do not know him, no matter how knowing they may be in the doctrine of his word, or how mighty in the exposition of the scriptures. "This is life eternal," said our Lord, "to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent;"* where, you see, the knowledge of God is put for the whole of spiritual life, and thus is inseparably joined with the love of God. And thus, brethren, you see the essential difference between all that mere information concerning God, which, however embraced by the understanding, lies no deeper; and that inward, heart-received, and heart-subduing knowledge, written with the finger of God, upon our deepest and most governing affections. Without the latter, we know not God. All our knowledge of him is blindness. It is

*John xvii. 3.

seeing, but not perceiving. It is knowledge lodged upon the surface, as good seed lying by the way-side, or upon stony ground, where it has no depth of earth and cannot bear any fruit. It is not seed implanted in the only soil that is prepared for it, and where only it can spring forth and yield the fruits of righteousness. What if we "understand all mysteries and all knowledge," so as to speak of the things of God "with the tongues of men and of angels," and have not *love!* Alas! "it profiteth us nothing;" we are but as "the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal." "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is Love."

And now I will conclude this discourse with a few practical lessons arising out of the views we have taken:

1st. We may learn wherein consists the essential nature of true piety.

True piety is simply likeness to God. Since he is Light, his people are called "Children of Light."* To be in the image of God was the whole of the nature of piety when man was unfallen. To be created anew in that image, by regenerating grace, is the basis and substance of all piety now that fallen man is striving to regain what sin has made him lose. To make that likeness perfect once more, will be the finishing work of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. But God is Love. The sum and substance, therefore, of all true piety is *love*, in its two aspects, towards God and towards man. All the imperfectness of piety is imperfectness of love; and the perfection of the child of God is his being "made perfect in love." And thus, when St. John repeats in a subsequent verse of the same chapter the declaration of the text, "God is Love,"

* 1 Thess. v. 5.

he adds, as an inference, "He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." "As He is, so are we in this world."

The law of God is like himself—it is Love. In adaptation to our infirmities, it is broken into many precepts, but all are one commandment—Love. It is a harp of many strings, but all unite in one harmony of love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," as it is the perfectness of its Author. The Christian character is made up of many virtues and aspects of grace, as it exhibits the several features of holiness, of humility, of devotedness to God, of benevolence to man, of patience, of meekness, of prayerfulness, of abhorrence of that which is evil, of zeal for that which is good; but love is the life of all; and just in proportion as the Christian character approaches perfection, are all those several aspects seen blended and merged into one controlling, harmonizing, animating, strengthening, love to God and man.

While the children of God continue in this earthly state, their character will be imperfect; its several parts deficient in proper harmony and proportion; some aspects and influences of piety taking undue precedence of others which should have equal prominence; more faith, perhaps, than gentleness; more distrust of self than trust in God; more hope than fear, or more fear than hope; more meekness to submit to affliction than boldness to go forward in duty; more prayerfulness to obtain blessings than thankfulness to acknowledge them. From Christian to Christian, there is great diversity of religious character, even among those who may be considered equally holy; some shining more beautifully in one aspect of piety, some in

another. Let us remember, they are "*all children of the light.*" And where, in all this world of imperfectness, does the purest light find a surface to rest on, without being spoiled thereby of its native proportion of parts, and changed from its original aspect? The child of God never in this life exhibits in himself the image of God without imperfection. All the features are there, but more or less obscure and out of harmony. But he is growing in grace. The likeness is being brought out into more and more fullness, as his Christian character becomes more meet for the heavenly inheritance. The more mature he becomes in "the mind of Christ," the more will all things within him assume their proper place, and proportion, and symmetry; losing their individual aspects, and combining into one blended harmony of all Christian virtues, like the several precepts of the law uniting and fulfilled in one single commandment. And when the child of God attains the heavenly state and the whole "general assembly and Church of the first born" are there in their fullness and final glory, without spot or blemish, all in the perfect likeness of God, suppose ye that we shall then contemplate each other's perfectness in the several separate virtues in which present circumstances draw out the Christian character, any more than we shall then have need to read the one commandment of the law of God, under the several particulars of duty in which it is now presented in the ten? Shall we know one another but as made perfect in love? Will not all the separate aspects of Christian excellence be then merged in the simple perfectness of love, as all hues of the rainbow are lost in the pure white of the perfect light?

2d. The view we have taken of the divine character, under the guidance of the text, suggests considerations most comforting, under the various dispensations of Providence.

It is written that "all things work together for good to them that love God." "*All things!*" Nothing is excepted. The whole universe of things is included. All conspire, and all work together, the greatest and the least, the mightiest movements of empires, the least changes in domestic or personal affairs, for the ultimate bringing to pass of the promises of God to his Church, and to every individual child of God in that great household. But how conflicting oftentimes appear those things; how directly set and prepared by man *against* all the good of them that love God; with what malice the powers of Satan are continually at work to make all things result in their eternal ruin; so that it often seems as if there were nothing more contradictory to the aspect of all things, than that they can possibly be working together for the good of them that love God. But look abroad upon the face of the sky and the surface of the earth! What variety, what contrasts, of colors does the light exhibit! And yet all these work together, all *must* work together, to form the uncolored light of day. Can you trace their operation to that result? And is there any mystery in the ways of God more inexplicable? Is it any less difficult for us to comprehend that under the power and wisdom of God, those things which seem so conflicting in the events of theworld, in regard to his Church, should all be made to co-operate continually in producing its ultimate good, and in proving that towards it, all the ways of

God are love? Let us remember that to such children as his people are in this world, it takes all his ways, the chastening as well as the comforting, the severe as well as the tender, to deal with them in love. The dark lines have as much to do in making their true light, as the milder. Were all dispensations without trials, without sorrow, God would not be Love in his dealings with such children, so compassed with infirmities, so easily going astray, so in need of correction, any more than if all were unmixed tribulation. Oh! how should this enable us to glory even in any tribulation, knowing that if we do love God, that trial is only one aspect, one operation, of his love toward us; one of those lines of Providence, which, as when we look upon the wrong side of a beautiful tapestry, seem now all mixed, and confused, and contradictory, as if, instead of any wise design or loving object, all were at best but blind chance; but when seen on the right side, as they appear to those who look on them from heaven, whence every line can be traced to the uttermost, exhibit but one continual evidence of the hand of God, ordering all things in infinite wisdom, all with constant reference to the fulfillment of his promises, all working together in the most faithful, patient, unchangeable love to them that love him. This we now know *by faith*, on the assurance of God's word. It is a part of that very working together of all things for our good, that we must know these things only by faith, so long as we abide in the flesh. The sight of them will come when the end of them is accomplished. Then, with what adoration will we trace in every minute particular, the ways of God's love towards us and his whole Church, and see what steady light was

always upon us, however dark the earthly cloud; and how steadily, from all directions, the working together went on; and how all the wrath of man and all the malice of Satan, were forced to join in it, so that in that respect *"all things" indeed were ours*, "the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come."*

Lastly. From the view we have taken of the character of God, there arises a thought of no little seriousness, for the consideration of all who withhold their hearts from him.

They often read this very text, "God is Love," as if it were a refuge from the sterner declarations of the scriptures; and hence they indulge the hope that though they go on to neglect him, to disobey him, to refuse him their hearts, and set at nought his fear, and in such sin should die; nevertheless, either he will not, or else *may* not execute his law upon them in the awful penalty pronounced in his word, but in some way or other may make room for their escape. I beg them to consider. There is no encouragement in this character of God to them. Precisely the reverse. You might as well say there never could have been such a judgment as the deluge, as that the impenitent will not be cast into hell, because God is Love. I grant that between the two judgments there is an unspeakable difference in degree, but both are judgments of God's anger against sinners—both awful beyond our conception; and if his being Love must prevent the one, it would have prevented the other. You might as well say, the fearful flash of the red lightning can never appear, because all light in its original perfection is purely white. The more our God is Love in the harmony of all his

*1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.

attributes, and in the harmony of all his works and ways, the more must he be "a consuming fire" to those who, instead of harmonizing in their hearts and ways with his will, exhibit rebellion where there should be love, and reject that great manifestation of the love of God toward us, his only begotten Son, sent into the world that they might live through him. Surely, the earthly ruler is not less the loving magistrate, when he bars the prison upon the criminal, than when he opens the door of some peaceful asylum to the needy and deserving. You know it is just the contrary. The more he is love, the more is he just; the more will he uphold the just law; the more will he be stern against transgressors; the more the obedient can rely on him, because the more must the disobedient be afraid of him. Mercy is not love. In some minds it is the antagonist of the ends of true love. Tenderness in an earthly ruler, compassion that lays aside the penalty of the law, is not love. It may be the very reverse; producing results which true love would of all things most deprecate. You must think of God always as having a law to uphold and honor, a moral government of boundless extent to sustain. You must take care to remember, that however dear to him is every immortal soul; however he "desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn unto him and live;" infinitely dearer to him are his own law, and government, and holiness, and truth, all of which are pledged for the punishment of sin; and the very fact that God is Love, not mercy, not compassion, not goodness, not holiness, not justice, not wisdom, but the meeting and harmonizing of all these in that love which includes and employs all, each

in its place, in a perfect government over all creatures in heaven and earth, and under the earth, is as much the assurance that the sinner who doth not turn unto him must perish under the wrath of his law, as that the penitent sinner who doth turn unto him shall live in the fullness of his grace and glory. "*The terror of the Lord*" is not another part of God's character, but the same. It is only that character of love seen from another quarter, in manifestation on another surface, in exercise toward another object; just as the same pillar of fire was all brightness and consolation toward God's people, and all darkness and dismay toward their enemies. All depends upon us—upon the position from which we look at God, the direction from which we come to him. Do we contemplate him from amidst his own reconciled people—do we come to him with hearts turned unto him, seeking him through his only Son, our only Saviour? then he is love, and because he is love, our salvation and blessedness in his kingdom are sure—all is light. But is it from the opposite quarter, from among those who would not have him to reign over them, and would not seek him, but reject his grace? then is he still infinite love; and for that very reason, your condemnation and rejection are certain. There is now no salvation for you; you are lost forever, except you are in Christ Jesus. God, in wonderful love, has provided a way by which we may live before him; by which the most sinful, truly repenting, may live in his peace and glory forever. But it is "*through his only begotten Son.*" The way is broad enough for all. The invitation is free enough and urgent enough for all. None are cast out that come in that way. None are accepted

that come in any other. None that perish will have any to accuse but themselves. "Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life," is the Saviour's kind remonstrance with them now. Ye *would* not come unto me, that ye might have life, will be his stern rebuke and condemnation, when they meet him as the Judge of quick and dead, and find themselves cast out, and condemned, and lost, to all eternity.

God is love. His saints, made perfect in his likeness, are love. Heaven, the communion of God and his saints, is love. What is hell? Only think of it as having, in its fallen angels and its lost immortal souls, *no love;* their intellectual powers and all the capacities and desires of their fallen nature in fullest vigor, but *no love!* What then must be that awful fellowship—that communion of the lost! Saviour, we flee to thee! Oh! bind our hearts to thee. In thee may it be the prayer and striving of our whole life to be found, each hour of life, that wherever death may find us we may be safe in thee!

SERMON XIV.

THE BELIEVER'S HIDDEN LIFE IN CHRIST.

COLOSSIANS iii. 3, 4.

"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God: when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."*

THESE words are addressed to all who trust that they have become truly followers and partakers of Christ, by having experienced in their hearts the quickening power of his Spirit, raising them from the death of sin to a new and spiritual life. The Apostle has just exhorted them thus:—"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God;"—that is—If indeed ye have followed Christ in his resurrection, so that by his grace you have risen from spiritual death to newness of life, then follow him in his ascension; follow him in your hearts, to where he now sitteth, at the right hand of God; set your affection, not on things on the earth, where Jesus is not, and where the portion of his people cannot be, but on things above; those eternal, ineffable glories, of which He is the centre, and source, and being. And then, as a reason why Christians should thus ascend in their affections to where Christ now is, amidst "things above," he bids them remember that they are "*dead*," and their "*life is hid*

* Preached in Carfax Church, Oxford, England, May 15, 1853.

with Christ in God;" adding, as a most stimulating motive to that heavenward setting of their affections, the glorious assurance, that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear," then shall all that are his, who have set their hearts upon him as their Saviour and portion, "appear with him in glory."

Such is the connection of our text. Let us take up its parts:—

1st. "*Ye are dead.*" The persons addressed are true Christians. In what sense is the Christian *dead?* We answer, *dead* to sin. The fact that he is risen with Christ, or by virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, to newness of life, implies that he is crucified with Christ, and so has become dead unto sin. The Apostle, speaking of Christ and Christians, says: "In that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

In all men, there is at the same time both death and life; death unto God, and life to sin; or else life unto God and death to sin. The heart unrenewed by the Spirit of Christ, is dead to God; dead to things above; dead to the love of Christ; dead to the motives and affections of the Christian life. It has no pleasure in them, nor desire for them, nor sensibility to them. It lies in the grave of its alienation from God, as deaf to his heavenly invitations and promises, as the dead body in the sepulchre is deaf to all the sounds of the world above it. Such, before God, my dear brethren, are all here—young

*Romans vi. 9.

and old, the gay and the grave, the most amiable, and the most upright, and the most refined, until there take place in them a spiritual resurrection—till they be raised up by the power of the Spirit of our risen Saviour, breathing into them the breath of a new and holy life.

But that death is all alive—a living death. Precisely that which is the death of the heart towards God, is its life to the world and sin. How quick the sensibility of that unrenewed heart to all that is seen and temporal, as its substitute for all that is unseen and eternal. How naturally and easily it sins, and perseveres in sin. Its affections need no exhortations or urgent sermons to persuade them in that direction. Tell it of the love of Christ, and how cold it is. Tell it of the praise or gain of the world, and how it kindles with life. Under the loudest, most powerful declarations of the will of God, it hears not. But let the will of the flesh, or the will of man, but whisper its command and reward, and how keen the hearing; and how immediately the question of obedience receives the needful consideration!

But, on the other hand, the heart of the true servant of Christ is dead, and yet is alive. Sin hath lost its dominion over him. Its power is broken. He is created anew in Christ. He is risen with Christ from the death of sin; and though, like Lazarus coming up out of the sepulchre, "bound hand and foot with grave-clothes," the bonds of that old spiritual death be not all removed, he is no more dead in sin, but is alive unto God—alive to the voice of his will, alive to the enjoyments of his service, alive to the attractions of holiness, alive to the persuading, animating, subduing power of the love of Christ.

The great motives of godliness find a true response in his heart. There is a communion of nature between them and him. They draw in the direction of his affections. Religion, with him, instead of a mere form of outward observances, like a vesture thrown over a stone, is an inward spring of life and love. Instead of a mere accretion of works, wrought out independently of all discrimination of motive and inward affection; religion with him is a new heart, having God for its chosen portion, Jesus for its precious example, and trust, and strength; seeking present holiness for its present happiness; eternal holiness for its coveted, eternal inheritance; and good works of righteousness as naturally and as necessarily flowing from all, as a fountain sends out its stream.

But here it is well to say, we are not teaching that the servant of Christ in the present life is *as* dead to sin as the unrenewed man is dead to God; nor that he is *as* alive unto God as the other is alive to the world and sin. Such, indeed, will be the attainment of the child of grace, when grace shall have finished in glory the work which is now being carried on in his heart. The morning light is advancing unto the perfect day. The child is growing into the full development of the stature of the perfect man. The spiritual life is getting more and more complete dominion. The spiritual death is surrendering one remnant after another of its broken sceptre. Meanwhile, however, there is a remnant of that death. The Canaanite is vanquished, but is yet in the land, and ready at any opportunity to assault and wound, if not to slay. The serpent is bruised with a deadly blow, but is not dead, and has venom still. The malefactor at the side of the crucified Jesus,

was essentially dead. Life was certainly, though slowly, ebbing away under the wounds of his crucifixion. But he was not so dead that he could not turn upon the Lord of life at his side, and assault him with bitter mockery and reviling. So our old nature, crucified with Christ, however essentially dead to sin, has life enough remaining to make us know that the malefactor within us has yet to be watched, and that our warfare is not yet accomplished. The time is at hand when that death unto sin will be completed, and our newness of life will be consummated: when all of spiritual corruption will be laid aside in the grave, and all of spiritual perfectness will be put on in heaven, and our souls shall be with Christ at the right hand of God.

2d. Let us come now to the second part of our text—"*Your life is hid with Christ in God.*"

"*Your* life;" ye who are "risen with Christ." Your life, as Christ's people—the life of your faith—that which makes you, and sustains you, as servants of God. It is a life so foreign from all that is natural to man, so different from any other manifestation of life in this world, so much like that of some beautiful exotic of the conservatory, the food and the atmosphere of which are exclusive and peculiar to itself, that as we look at a faithful, heavenly-minded Christian, "in the world," but not "of the world," living by a life evidently pertaining to another world, we are moved to ask, how has he that very peculiar, that unearthly life? And the answer of the text is—It is "*with Christ.*" *There* is the fountain. With the Christian it is in regard to *operation;* with Christ in point of *habitation.* We receive the supply. Jesus keeps the source. The

unsearchable riches, the inexhaustible fullness of all our spiritual life, is indivisibly in *him*. Out of that fullness we receive, day by day, grace to help in time of need. The manna comes down upon the Church while making her way through the wilderness to the heavenly land, not to be deposited in her treasury or with her ministers, as bread laid up for future need. It is given day by day, directly from heaven; the daily supply of daily wants. "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be." Now, as at the beginning, it is "*with Christ.*" He has never parted with it in any sense, so as to vest the possession or the distribution anywhere else. He will have every one of his people, and all his Church, to realize at every moment the most perfect dependence upon him for the daily continuance, by his own personal and direct ministration, of that spiritual life which he only did originally create. He will keep the Christian always consciously weak himself, that he may be strong in the Lord; always poor in himself, that he may be rich in faith and in supplies out of his Saviour's fullness; always knowing that while he lives unto Christ, he lives only by Christ, by new applications of prayer, and new communications of grace.

It is written concerning the chosen people in the way, from Egypt to Canaan, "They did all drink the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." And we may add, that as that rock represented Christ—so, in that chosen people, all drinking therefrom, all as dependent thereupon, one day as another, one year as another; never becoming any more capable of living without the constant renewal of the first supplies; all drinking immediately from that rock, without any intermediate ministry

or priesthood—in that people was represented the whole blessed communion and fellowship of God's peculiar people in all ages and parts of the world, in union with their common life; all drinking the same spiritual drink; all receiving their supplies day by day; all seeking them in none but Christ, directly from him, and none ever coming unto him in vain.

3d. But let us draw nearer to this great mystery of grace. Your life is not only *with* Christ—it *is* Christ. So speaks our text most positively: "When Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear," &c. What can be more intimate than the union between the believer and the Saviour! We receive for our salvation not merely our Lord's promises, but the Lord himself; not merely what he imparts, but what he is. He himself is our bread, and strength, and life, and hope, and glory. It is *he* that is "made unto us, of God, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

How frequently and strongly do we find in the scriptures this identifying of our spiritual life with the person of our blessed Lord, as being himself that very life. For example: "The bread of God is he which came down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world." "I am that bread of life." "I am the resurrection and the life." "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "He that hath the Son hath life." "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit."

The object in such passages certainly is to draw the reliance of our hearts as near as possible to the very person, and immediate communion, of our ever-living Saviour. We are prone to trust in means of grace, as if they were

grace, or could communicate grace; to use the sacraments of Christ too much as substitutes for himself, or depositories of his gifts; instead of the means by which, under the power of his Spirit and the light of his word, we are to get the nearer to him, and thus, by faith, partake directly in his fullness. The object in such scriptures as I have just cited, is, to keep most distinct in our minds the important truth, that whatever the value of the divinely instituted ordinances and ministry of the Gospel; however precious even that revealed truth of the Gospel in which, under the form of scripture, Christ is set before us; our new life cannot be found *in them.* They may lead us to the life; they cannot give the life. The Christian must use them, but he must not rest in them. Nothing must for a moment interfere with his reliance upon, or his looking directly unto, Jesus. The life that he lives in the flesh must be in all things, at each moment, a life of faith in the Son of God; and that faith embracing, leaning upon, applying to, and receiving from, the Son of God, most directly and immediately.

But we advance to a further declaration of our text. The Christian's spiritual life is said to be "*hid with Christ.*"

It is hidden from the Christian and from all that would ruin his soul. The life of the stream from which you quench your thirst in the valley, is hid when its source is far out of sight in the height of the mountain, where the hand of man can never reach to defile or diminish it. So is our life "*hid with Christ.*" He who by the suffering of death became our life, by resurrection from death and exaltation to the right hand of God, became our *hidden*

life. The rock from which we all drink the same spiritual drink, is high in the mount of God, where no eye but that of faith can reach, where no foot but that of prayer can mount.

When the whole population of a city depends for water upon one single stream, and the city is encompassed with enemies, who would gladly get at its source, to poison it, how great is the comfort of the dependent people, to know that its spring is hid in the height of the mountain, where no enmity of man can approach. But how much greater the security and the comfort, when not only the source of the stream, but all its ways and channels, by which it reaches the people within the city, are so hidden, that no malice of the enemy can find them out, to divert or pollute them. Such a city is the living Church, which is the blessed company of all God's living people, and which contains none else. The life of every one of those members depends on one single fountain. Cut off their communication therewith, or poison its supplies, and all perish. Abundant is the enmity of Satan, and of the thousand agencies which he employs in this world, to accomplish that work, if it be possible to the power or skill of any created being. How earnest and repeated were his attempts at that very end, when our Lord was on the earth. The temptations which he addressed to the Saviour, in the desert—what was their object but to introduce, if it were possible, only one sinful thought or wish into that holy mind, and thus forever poison the source of all our spiritual life? But our blessed Lord is now exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Within the veil of the heavenly sanctuary; under the shadow of the

Almighty; in the brightness of the glory of our ascended and glorified Redeemer, is your life now hid. Satan has no access there; the thousand polluting influences of the world, by which all on earth is so defiled, have no access there. Our own follies, and infirmities, and sins, have no access there. We can receive out of that blessed source of life, but we cannot reach it. It is hid from the believer who lives by it, as well as from the powers of darkness that would cut off our access to it. It is written of him in whom is that life, "Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice." "The same yesterday, to-day, and forever," is that mysterious, unsearchable, glorious life of all the Church of God.

But we have the additional comfort of knowing that the *ways* by which that life comes to and refreshes the hearts of the people of God, are hidden, as well as its origin in Christ. It is written of the servant of God, that "*He shall be as the tree planted by the rivers of water.*" And it is written of that servant's Saviour and hope, that he shall be to his people, "*as rivers of water in a dry place.*" And the Psalmist, speaking of that precious consolation, says, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High." On the strength of that assurance, he exclaimed, "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." But that river is out of sight to the world. Its waters reach the heart of the servant of God, and become "a very present help" just in the time of need, by ways un-

known but to Him who knoweth all things. No persecution can find them out, to cut them off. "Your life is hid." The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so (said our Lord) is every one that is born of the Spirit." And we add, so is every one that is sustained, and sanctified, and refreshed in the divine life, by the Spirit of God. Secret, inscrutable, beyond the malice of man and of Satan, is the way of communion between the soul of the believer and his spiritual life in Christ. Is some child of God the banished victim of persecution, dwelling in caves of the earth, or buried alive in dungeons of the Papal inquisition, cut off by priests of Antichrist from all the ordinances of the visible Church and all the visible communion of its means of grace; still there is a *river of God, full of water*, to make glad that thirsting heart. His communion therewith is unchanged. Antichrist knows not its ways. Satan cannot hinder them. It springs up in the prison of the persecuted believer, and amidst the flames of the Christian martyr. As soon as we need it, and seek it, it is present. We drink of that Spiritual Rock that follows us all the way of this wilderness; but *how* it follows us, is *hid*. And we rejoice that it is so; hid in its source; hid in its streams; hid from the power of Satan; hid from the follies and the violence of man; inaccessible even to the Christian believer, in the infirmities of his present nature, except simply as he may apply thereto in the prayer of faith, and receive out of the fullness of Christ, as every one hath need.

But there is still a stronger expression in our text.

Your life is said to be not only "*hid with Christ,*" but "hid with Christ *in God.*"

There is a reference here to the mediatorial work and office of our Lord, as depending on the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of the Christ, and also to the divine nature that he had from eternity, as the original source whence all the spiritual life, which, as Christ the Mediator, he bestows on sinners, is derived. As Jesus is our Mediator at the right hand of God, having obtained eternal redemption for us; as he is the God-man, in whom it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell; as he is exalted to be head over all things to his Church, our life is with him. He is the ultimate and only source to which we go for new supplies. He is "made unto us (saith St. Paul) wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." These are life eternal. But, saith the Apostle, he is "made unto us *of God*"—these precious gifts. An expression precisely corresponding with that of the text—"*with Christ in God.*" As Christ is both God and man, the foundation of our life is in our union of these two natures; but as he was from all eternity God, before he came in the nature of man, and as all he did and suffered for us, in man's nature, received its whole redeeming value and efficacy from its union with the nature of God; therefore is that divine nature the original source whence the fullness of that hid fountain proceeds; therefore we read, "with Christ *in God.*"

The same great truth is exhibited in that vision of St. John, wherein he beheld "the holy city, New Jerusalem;" "the inheritance of the saints in light." He saw "a pure

river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," representing the life of the people of God in their heavenly heritage." "*A pure river, clear as crystal.*" Beautiful image of perfect felicity! But mark whence that river issues: "*proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.*" Its origin, "hid with Christ in God." The grace that saves us has all its head-springs in the unsearchable depths of the being and government of God. It proceeds from under the very throne of the sovereignty of Jehovah; all his authority and power are its warrant; all the infinite riches of God are its supply; all the attributes of his nature—justice, and holiness, and truth, as well as mercy and compassion—unite in sending it forth for the life of the world. But, mark, it is the throne also of *the Lamb* whence it proceeds. The life comes not to sinners except by the mediation of the once crucified, now glorified and enthroned Lamb of God; through his sacrifice on earth, and his intercession in heaven. But issuing through that exalted mediation, supplied out of the unsearchable grace of God, it comes forth, not a rivulet for a few, but a *river* of life for a whole world—so full, so free, that whosoever will is entreated to come, and drink, and live forever. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of our God." The Prophet Isaiah, standing as if upon its banks, sounded the proclamation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." Jesus was still nearer to it, when he stood and cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." The way to it is all plain. The invitations to it are all free. Thousands of thousands have received thereof, and are now where they behold it in

all its breadth and fullness, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. To them and to us, it is equally the life that it is "with Christ *in God.*" All the stability of the throne of God; all the unchangeableness of the nature of God; all the boundless love of God in Christ to sinners, are thus our assurance, that it is a life which no necessities of his people can diminish; no devices of Satan reach; no corruptions of man pollute; as pure, as inexhaustible, as eternal, as God.

But there remains yet one declaration of our text. Your life is not always to be hid. Now we see not him in whom we believe as our life. He is gone to receive his kingdom—to prepare the mansions in his Father's house for his ransomed brethren. He will come again—"Christ, who is our life," saith the text, "*shall appear.*" "Every eye shall see him," of them "that pierced him," and of them that trust in him. "His appearing" will then be, not as "the man of sorrows," the despised Nazarene, with a little band of feeble disciples following his steps; but as the "Great God and Saviour," "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion,"—coming in the clouds of heaven with the glory of the Father, and with all the hosts of heaven attending his word. Then will our life be manifested, because *he* will be seen; "*we shall see him as he is.*" He will appear to his beloved people in all his unspeakable glory. They shall know, as they never knew before, *in whom they believed;* so that all shall realize, indeed, that eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor had it ever entered into their hearts to conceive, what a precious Saviour, what a glorious heritage, they embraced when they chose their portion in Jesus.

But not only will Christ, the life, appear in that day, but all to whom he has given life shall "*appear with him in glory.*" The glorious vine, with all its innumerable branches, and all the clustering and ripened fruit of its own life, "the travail of the soul" of our Redeemer, the purchase of his atoning blood, the whole blessed communion of saints, from the eldest born of the oldest dispensation of the covenant of salvation, through all the generations of those who were ever united to him by a living faith—all shall appear together, as one mystical body, one royal priesthood, one holy nation, entering into the glory of their infinitely exalted Head. It will be "the day of the *manifestation* of the sons of God;" the day of the manifestation of those who *are* sons of God, in distinction from those who are not; of those who have really had their life "with Christ in God," and so have lived a life of faith, from those who, under the profession of such life, had all their life in the flesh, and with the world.

We speak commonly of "the *invisible Church*," as distinguished from the visible; because it doth not now appear to us, who are alive unto God, and who are not—who are the true Church and who are not. The line between the merely professing Christians and the real Christians; communicants in the form only, and communicants in the spirit; the Church by participation in sacrament merely, and the Church by participation in the life of Christ—is now a hidden line. But when Christ shall appear, his real Church, no longer in any sense invisible, shall appear; the vital union of his people with him, their inseparable life, their common inheritance, shall appear. All that

were branches of the true vine, only by being tied to it by the outward bond of ordinances and forms, having never drank into its life, will have been taken away and given over to be burned, as the stubble; while every single branch, the least, the feeblest, that was united to the vine by an inward participation of life, will then appear with Christ its life in glory — the vine manifested in its branches — the Saviour glorified in all his brethren, his Holy Catholic Church. Oh! who can tell what is contained in the declaration: — "Then shall ye also appear with him in glory!" Think of the glory of Christ at the right hand of the throne of God! Think of our being made so to be with him, in that glory, that not only are our souls joint-heirs forever with him, but even our bodies are to be made "like unto his glorious body, by the mighty working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself;" think of all this enjoyed by each believer, in communion with that whole brotherhood of the Church of God, which shall be then gathered out of all generations, and all kindreds and dispensations, once so separated, and hid one from another, now all knowing that "they did all drink the same spiritual drink — for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ."

Now, my brethren, it is upon the broad basis of all the precious and animating considerations which we have thus endeavored to present to you, conscious all the while, how far short of the height and depth of the text we have come, that we are exhorted in the words of the Apostle, immediately following the text; "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of

God. Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth."

There is not time to urge this exhortation. It speaks for itself. What are things on the earth for a Christian's affections to be placed on, when Christ his life is in heaven, and all the hope of his soul is with him there; and when, to be ready to meet him at his appearing, and to appear with him when he cometh, is the great business and interest of our earthly state?

But you see, brethren, on what all our hope depends. Shall *we* appear with Christ when he appears; partakers of his glory, heirs with him of the kingdom? All depends on this—*Is he now our life?* Have we sought a new life in him? Are we conscious of having found a new life in him? Do we live now a life of faith on him; a life of holiness by him; a life of good works unto him? Can we say, "For me to live is Christ?" Then may we say also, "*For me to die is gain.*" But all depends on that one point—*Christ our present life.* Eternal life will be not a new life to the believer, but the present Christian life of faith, purified, expanded, ennobled; the little stream enlarged by open communion with God's unbounded glory. Oh, then, dear brethren, seek with your whole hearts, the experience of that life now in the flesh. "Hid with Christ in God," you can attain unto it, by the steps of earnest prayer, leaning upon the promises and invitations of the Gospel, and none shall fail but those who, in that way, will not seek and strive.

But have I not been speaking to many in this congregation to whom, though they do not doubt the correctness of my exposition of the text, I have been all the while

describing an experience, a life, to which they have no responding history, to which they feel themselves to be entire strangers? Have I not been speaking to those who know nothing of any life but that which they have in themselves, and to whom all that we have said is so alien from all their experience, that did they not know it to be scriptural, they would think it visionary? What then, my friends, is your hope? Can you have your portion in Christ, or with his people? Is there not an essential connection between that hidden life of the heart in him while we abide here, and that manifested life of his people with him, when they shall appear with him in glory? If you have not the one, can you attain the other? If the branch abide not in the vine, must it not be withered and dead? Can you be sensible that in your soul you seek not the life that is hid with Christ in God, and yet indulge the hope that when he appears, you will have a portion in that very life, and a place in the great communion of his people? "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

SERMON XV.

THE BELIEVER'S PROGRESSIVE LIFE IN CHRIST.

PROVERBS iv. 18.

"The path of the just is as the shining light which shineth more and more, unto the perfect day."

THE "just," in this verse, are the righteous, the men of a genuine faith and holiness. "The path of the just" is the walk, the life, the habitual character of such men. The passage is an Old Testament description of the gracious, happy, useful and brightening character of the true servant of God, in contrast with another path, of which the inspired writer had just said: "Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away." "The way of the wicked is *as darkness*."

The righteous were not called *Christians* in those days. But now that their name is taken from that of him in whose righteousness and by whose Spirit alone they can have any righteousness before God, we will substitute that new name for that by which they are called in the text, and will read the verse as if it were written, the path of the *Christian* is "as the shining light, which shineth more and more, unto the perfect day."

I. The Christian, in his habitual walk and character, is *as the shining light.*

How beautiful the illustration! Light must shine. You may hide it, but shine it will. Bury it in a dungeon —cover it with clouds—it shines as ever. All may be blindness around it, so that none see it, but it shines. Is it a diamond, encrusted with earth, in the rubbish of the mine? It makes itself known by its shining. Is it the glow-worm creeping on the ground? You know it by its shining. Such is genuine Christian piety. It is of its own nature light, and must give light, whether there be an eye to see it or not, and the heart in which it dwells must be full of light—of joy, and peace, and love, and hope, just so far as its piety has advanced from infancy towards maturity in Christ.

The light in that heart must be a *shining* light; shining not merely in its own chamber where dwell the Christian's affections, and joys, and tempers, and principles; but outwardly, through all the issues of that heart, in the life; shedding around it the radiance of truth, and purity, and loving kindness, and gentleness, and love; thus attracting the regards of men and leading their thoughts above to him whose light it is. So strongly do the scriptures insist on the essential connection between a Christian heart and a shining light, that they make true Christians identical with light. "*Ye were sometime darkness,*" said St. Paul. Mark the expression! In their unconverted state, they had been darkness itself, not merely walking in darkness, but identical with it. "*But now are ye light in the Lord;*" not only bearers of the light, as a candlestick bears the candle burning in its socket, but so penetrated with the radiance of a true godliness, so transformed by the grace of God into his own likeness, so identified

with Christ, who is "the true light," that "now ye are light;" but yet only "*in the Lord.*"

Thus the inseparable connection between the Christian's faith and a shining light. How beautifully was this exhibited in the prison at Phillippi! Paul and Silas, with their feet fast in the stocks, and their limbs in chains, and the midnight around them, and all the other inhabitants of the prison locked in sleep, but they themselves too full of the praises of God to sleep—how were they "light in the Lord;" how luminous became their very bonds; how full of joy was that midnight dungeon. Shining lights indeed! but where was the eye to see, or who in that solitude could be profited? God provided. Did he send the light, and would he not send the eye to see thereby? An earthquake shook the walls, unbarred the doors, loosed every man's bonds, awoke the jailor and his prisoners—provided thus the witnesses and the hearers. The jailor owned the hand of God; his heart was opened to the Gospel at the mouth of its faithful preachers, and with all his house he believed and was baptized. What is the lesson? Why, that no troublous circumstances can excuse, or need ever prevent us, from the manifestation in life of what it is in heart to be a Christian; that no condition is so out of sight but that we may glorify God therein and promote the spiritual good of men; that affliction, persecution, hatred, enmity, though intended for our destruction, may easily become, under God's providence, the very reflecting surface by which our light will be multiplied and our usefulness extended.

"No man liveth unto himself" alone. He cannot, if he would. The man who, through sinful disobedience to

God, is only darkness, cannot keep his darkness to himself. His shadow will darken others. The same is true of the children of light. The residence may be a hovel, the tenant a poor beggared cripple, full of suffering, almost speechless. But is he alive unto God? Has he the love of God shed abroad in his heart? Is he sweetly submissive to the will under which he suffers, abounding in thankfulness and praise, counting all his affliction light and but for a moment, in view of the eternal weight of glory for which, under divine grace, he knows it is preparing him? He is God's own son, adopted in Jesus Christ. He is an "heir of God and a joint heir with Christ." A crown of glory is awaiting him in heaven. Why, then, is he kept here thus to suffer? Why doth not his Heavenly Father receive him unto himself? He is "*a shining light.*" He is continued here that men may see and glorify his Father who is in heaven. Yea, but how many will ever see that poor hovel and that humble inhabitant? God will provide. He who hath set so beautiful a light in so humble a candlestick, will not permit it to shine unseen of men. A thousand ways he hath of making it known. That suffering child of God in his hovel may do more for the salvation of others by his patient, thankful, loving sufferings, and by his few words for Christ, than a hundred Christians of inferior piety. His one talent of meek, and lowly, and thankful acquiescence in the painful will of God, will gain ten talents to his Saviour's treasury. How strikingly does the well-known tract of the Dairyman's Daughter exemplify this! How obscure the rustic neighborhood in which her path lay. How secluded and humble the cottage she lived in, and the little upper chamber

she died in. How entirely out of sight had been her pious life; how unknown, save to two or three, was the lovely Christian grace that adorned her death. She was dear, indeed, very dear, to her Saviour; and sweetly did he shine upon her path as she went through the shadow of death. How little did she imagine that ever mortal ears, beyond that little neighborhood, would hear her name. And little did her affectionate pastor imagine, when writing that simple, touching narrative of her life and death in Christ, what God would do by that tract. God's thoughts are not our thoughts. "Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; where is the house that ye build unto me?" "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." God looked much more to that temple of his grace, that contrite daughter in her poverty of goods and poverty of spirit, as the manifestation of his glory, than to all our temples made with hands. What book of great learning and strong argument for the truth, has been honored in the conversion of sinners to Christ, as the light of the example of that child of God, set in that simple narrative? What minister has been the instrument, by his public labors, in the turning of so many to righteousness, as that narrative of "The Dairyman's Daughter," translated, as it has been, into various languages, read in palaces and cottages, loved among the noble and the poor, gathering fruit in the households of princes? A shining light! Not long ago a missionary in Asia Minor, amidst barbarism and the utmost spiritual darkness, found a little fellowship of some ten or twelve persons of oriental

speech, who, to his great delight, seemed true followers of Christ, acquainted with the way of life. It was not long since they had learned it; but their enlightening and conversion were traced to a copy of that precious narrative, which, in an oriental dress, had been brought, by Divine Providence, as a light into that dark land, and had thus been made a lamp to their path.

"Ye are the light of the world," said our Lord to his people. It is the combination of such faithful manifestations of the truth and grace of God, in Christ, in connection with the teaching of the word, that constitutes the only light of this world. Then follows the Lord's exhortation to his people: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Mark the words: "Let your light *so* shine before men," &c. It will shine, whether seen or not. But it may shine as a candle hid under a bushel, or as a candle set on a candlestick and giving light in all the house. Let it so shine as to be manifest, diffusive, invasive of the place of darkness. So seek and cherish the sanctifying influences of the Spirit of God upon your affections, tempers, manners and ways; so cultivate a spirit of active love and of out-going benevolence, according to the mind of Christ, that the genuine effect of the Gospel on its true disciples, to purify their affections, and exalt their whole character, to promote their purest happiness, and make them blessings among their fellow creatures, may be known and read of all that know you. "I have seen (says Bp. Taylor,) a religion that wholly dwelt upon the face and tongue; that like a wanton and undressed tree, spends all its juice in suckers

and irregular branches, in leaves and gum; and after all such goodly outsides, you should never eat an apple, or be delighted with the beauties or the perfumes of a hopeful blossom."

Let your light *so* shine, not ostentatiously, as if it were shining *on* yourself, instead of *from* yourself; as if it invited attention to your praises, instead of the praises of him in whose grace you live; but still not indistinctly, but positively and boldly — so that men seeing your good works, (for it is good works which must furnish the reflectors and manifestations of the light of God in your heart,) they may glorify (not *you*, for you must stand behind your works, as the body of the sun stands behind its light, invisible while it makes all things visible, but) "*your Father which is in heaven*," who is your light, and joy, and glory, and before whom, as the seraphim veiling their faces and their feet, while they praise him, you, as his true children and grateful receivers of his glory, will delight to stand concealed in the shadow of your good works; like a fair taper which shines to all the room, but casts a shadow around itself.*

He that would be thus a shining light, so glorifying God in the sight of men, must live very near to God,

* I cannot refrain from quoting here that beautiful passage of Bp. Taylor's sermon at the funeral of the Countess of Carbery, from which the above figure is taken: "Like a fair taper, when she shined to all the room, yet round about her own station she cast a shadow and a cloud, and she shined to every body but herself. But the perfectness of her prudence and excellent parts could not be hid; and all her humility and arts of concealment, made the virtues more amiable and illustrious. For as pride sullies the beauty of the fairest virtues, so humility is the greatest eminency and art of publication in the whole world; and she in all her arts of secrecy and hiding her worthy things, was but like one that hideth the wind, and covers the ointment of her right hand."

dwelling constantly in his light, as the moon, so dark in itself, keeps up its constant contributions to the earth only by a constant walk in the radiance of the sun. Your life must be that inner life which is "hid with Christ in God."

II. But the Christian in his habitual walk is compared not only to the *shining*, but to the *advancing and increasing* light—the shining light "which shineth *more and more*."

Thus is declared, the progressive nature, the ascending progress, the increasing strength and usefulness of true religion in the heart.

At its beginning, at its birth out of the darkness of our natural state of alienation from God and insensibility to heavenly things, with all the delusions of such a condition, it is like "*the morning light;*" "morning spread upon the mountains" and not yet reaching the valleys; morning spread as a vesture of many colors upon the headlands, gradually extending to the lowlands and losing its coloring, as it advances, in the pure white light of the maturer day. Then there is often a mistiness remaining when the darkness is passed away. The features of the landscape are indistinct. The dividing lines of hill and vale, of land and sea, are invisible. Things appear out of shape and proportion. Some leading heights are beautifully revealed; others, less prominent, are yet in the shadow; while on much of the landscape there is an uncertainty over which imagination may play without guide or limit. Such is the beginning of the day of grace in the sinner's soul. A long, dark night has been upon him. The Sun of Righteousness hath risen and is chas-

ing the night away. But it is early morning yet—only a feeble dawn. His views are very obscure. The sight of the depths of his own sinful nature, of his many and great necessities, and of his relations to God and his Saviour; his knowledge of the temptations and dangers of his path, and of the need of watchfulness, and how easily he may be deluded and overcome, all is very confused. The day has begun; he is born again; he has become truly a child of the light and of the day; he knows enough of his sinfulness to repent of it, and to be humbled before God on account of it; he knows enough of the Saviour to flee to him and love him; he knows enough of holiness to hunger after it, and of the "hope that maketh not ashamed" to rejoice in it; he is a new creature in Christ Jesus, but a new creature at the dawn of life; amidst clouds, and shadows, and uncertainties, and obscurities, as we may suppose the new-created earth to have been, when there was upon it only the light that sufficed to divide the day from the night, and to manifest in general the hand of God all around, and while as yet the great lights in the firmament had not been made. How much has he to learn of himself; of the world in its dangerous influences upon a heart striving to be the Lord's; of the preciousness of the love and peace of God in Christ; of a life of faith, in its contests, its trials, its encouragements, its victories! Some points of Christian character are beautifully brought out. Others lie in a great degree undeveloped. There is often a want of proportion of parts, and symmetry of stature, which impairs strength and causes unsteadiness. Self-knowledge is feeble; self-confidence is strong. Feelings are too much mistaken for affections.

Impulse is too often the substitute for permanent principle. Mere sensibilities of nature appear as precious fruits of the Spirit. A lively and ardent imagination takes the name of spirituality of mind. Angels of light are made out of apparitions to which the remaining darkness of nature gives birth. It is only the dawn of day. But it is the day. God has shined into the heart, and already is he glorified in that beginning of his work of grace.

If the subsequent and more mature state of Christian character be more calculated, on many accounts, to show forth the praises of him who calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light; there are features peculiar to the first life of God's children, which, in their own way, but most beautifully, exhibit his hand. Glorious indeed is the natural day now well advanced, as it rises towards its noon. There is nothing hid from the light thereof. The heavens then, most eminently declare the glory of God. But the morning has its own peculiar song of praise, and sweetly does it tell of Him that created it, as the sun "cometh forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber." So is it also in the work of grace. Glorious, beyond comparison, will be that perfect day of Christian life, when every sin shall be banished, and every infirmity removed, and every grace matured, and the image of God in man shall be as perfect a reflection of his own perfections as created mind is capable of. Every step of advancement in the Christian toward that maturity of stature, is a further step in the praise of him who, being the Author, is also the Finisher, of our faith. But eminently does the *beginning* of the Christian life glorify God. It

is not life increasing upon life, but arising out of death. It is not light advancing upon light, but beginning out of darkness. It is not the new creation putting on one additional beauty after another, but standing in all its newness, in the dew of its birth, a striking contrast to the chaos from which it has just come forth. The ransomed spirits made perfect in heaven, have their own song of praise, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God." The ransomed sinner on earth just come out of the bondage and death of sin, hath his song also: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath *begotten us again* unto a lively hope—to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

But the path of the Christian is as the shining light of day, not only in its beginning at early dawn, but as it shineth "*more and more.*" That light is never stationary. Upward it ascends till it attains meridian. Brighter and brighter it becomes till the day is perfect. Clouds may obscure it. Storms may trouble it. Its increase may not be visible each hour. It may seem more obscure when near its zenith than when just emerged from the mists of the mountains; but gradually, silently, it rises to the perfect day. The shadows diminish till they cease. The changing, varied, beauties of the morning are gradually exchanged for the finished glory of the unclouded noon. So does true religion grow in the heart and life. Such is the growth in grace which we are required to make, day by day; such the growth which it is of the essential nature of a new heart to desire to make, and which we

must make if we would enjoy a present evidence that we have been begotten again, and are the living children of God. In that progress, the Christian becomes more pure in heart, more humble in spirit, more elevated in his affections, less selfish in his aims, and more benevolent towards others. He gets nearer to Christ, and manifests more of his mind. He increases in the knowledge of himself, of his sinfulness, his dependence and necessities. He knows more of the trials, and more of the consolations, of a faithful disciple. His walk is more steady and consistent. The love of Christ reigns in him, with a more habitual and constraining power. Faith in Christ, working by love, becomes more simple, and child-like, and firm, in its leaning on the promises; more courageous in undertaking trying duties; more successful in overcoming the world; more patient to run the race set before it; more diligent for the prize of its high calling. The whole example is more lovely; the whole spirit more pure; the whole man more and more transformed, by the renewing of his mind. That undue sway of mere sentiment or imagination, which the new-born Christian so often exhibits, passes away before the steady increase of settled principles, established in the word of God. Changing frames of feeling, sometimes vigorous, sometimes lifeless, are exchanged for the better mastery of heart-seated affections, implanted by the Spirit and nourished at the fountain of inexhaustible grace. There is less dependence on excitement, with less fickleness of spirit; there is more quietness with more continuance of an earnest spirit. Depressions of mind are less frequent; serene reliance on the promises is more constant. "Patient continuance in well doing," is more and

more the tenor of his way. The shallow brook, now scarcely finding its narrow and often unseen way, now swollen by sudden rain, till it overflows its banks and goes on its noisy course, soon to be reduced again to feebleness and obscurity, is too often the type of religious character recently begun. The deep, full river, fed by unfailing springs, never overflowing, never shallow, silently advancing its tribute of waters to the ocean, is the better type of a better state. Let me use the eloquence of Bishop Taylor here. Describing exactly what I aim at, he said of a devout lady whose funeral sermon he was preaching: "In all her religion, and in all her actions of relation towards God, she had a strange evenness and untroubled passage, sliding toward her ocean of God and of infinity, with a certain and silent motion. So have I seen a river, deep and smooth, passing with a still foot and a sober face, and paying to the great exchequer of the sea, a tribute large and full; and hard by it, a little brook skipping and making a noise upon its uneven and narrow bottom; and after all its talking and bragged motion, it paid to its common audit, no more than the revenues of a little cloud. So have I sometimes compared the issues of her religion to the solemnities and famed outsides of another's piety."*

My dear brethren, I cannot too earnestly beseech you to remember the essentially progressive nature of true religion in the heart. "*Grow in grace*" is the requirement of our Lord, inscribed over the very birth-place of the child of God. "Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before," is

* Sermon at the Funeral of the Countess of Carbery.

the motto of the Christian life. "Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled;" they that hunger and thirst for more and more, no matter what the attainment already: such, in the form of a benediction, is our Lord's expression for the aspiring spirit of a heart alive unto righteousness. The fruitful branch bringing forth much fruit, and pruned, and trained, and stretching forth its arms, and searching the soil with its extending roots, that it may bring forth more fruit; such is our Lord's chosen image to set forth his true and faithful disciple growing in grace. His path is as the shining light that goes on to shine more and more. Unlike that of the morning, ascending toward meridian and never going backward, it may have its periods of decline. Sometimes, like the day in its progress, it may *seem* to decline, when it is only that its sensible consolations are less, while its inward life is strengthening. Clouds are upon the face of its joys, while the light beyond is in full communion with him who is the same yesterday, to-day and forever. It is not necessary to real growth, that you shall be able to discern your progress from day to day; any more than you may expect to measure the ascent of the sun from moment to moment. But from hour to hour, the movement of the shadow, contracting more and more, does show the steady increase of the day. So, when you take some prominent besetment of your evil nature to measure by, you will see, from time to time, that its shadow is less and less as your path advances towards the perfect day of your hope and holiness.

There is a shining light in earthly things, of which it cannot be said that it shineth more and more unto the

perfect day—an Aurora, but not that which increases till it ends in the greater glory. Often it flashes out its fitful streams of radiance, so that the benighted traveller is made to hope the morning breaks, while it is yet unbroken night. It is fickle and uncertain, stays where it begins, brings no vital warmth, quickens no powers of life, affords no guidance, and dies away in the perfect night. So is there a counterfeit of God's true grace in the sinner's heart, which often in outward appearance much resembles it; exceeds it often in the pretensions and manifestations of its early existence; puts out bolder efforts, shoots out hither and thither with greater activity, draws the admiration of many, and puts out of countenance the steady, modest, and often unseen working of true piety; but it is all excitement and impulse. Its life is in itself. It knows nothing of "*patient continuance.*" It has no growth. Where it began, it ends its race. Its brightest hour is at its dawn. Such religion proceeds not from the fountain of life in Christ, and therefore can never rise to him or above the world. He that guides his path by its example will be confounded. He that takes his knowledge of religion from such stimulated growths, where the life is excitement, and the strength to abide depends on excitement more and more, will be brought under a delusion by which many have been led into greater darkness. Measure the reality of your religion by its earnestness to grow, its consciousness of present great deficiency, its hungering and thirsting after more of all that belongs to the likeness of God, and of all that his scriptures set before you to seek. Religion that is born at its maturity, and the progress of which is only to get more

infirm and less animated, but not more deep-seated and controlling, is very like the piety of a man who was much with St. Paul in a part of his ministry, but of whom he wrote by and by—"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world."

III. But there is a perfect day to every dawn of morning. "He that hath begun a good work in you, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ."* "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." "I will come again, (said the Sun of Righteousness) and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." That will be the perfect day of the disciple of Christ, for which all his growth in grace is preparation; towards which every step of growth is advancement; of which every present gift of grace is "the earnest of the Spirit," in which the present beginnings of grace as naturally terminate, as infancy ripens into manhood; and the brightness and blessedness of which we can now conceive of no more than the glory of the noontide sun could be anticipated, had you never seen but the first streaks of the morning, tipping with gold the tops of the mountains. I know not any higher idea of the perfect day of the Christian's light and blessedness, when his every hope will be fulfilled, and all the promises accomplished, than that glorious day of Christ, when he shall receive his people to himself, and they shall be with him where he is, and thus inhabit eternal glory, in the fullness of his glory; made like him, perfectly; seeing him, knowing him, communing with him, without a

*Phil. i. 6.

cloud or a barrier, in the nearness of a perfect union. "Then shall they shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." The perfectness of their day will be in the perfectness of their own attainments in holiness. God's work will be completed in them. His image will be perfectly renewed upon them. Their sanctification will have ripened into a finished redemption, from all the bonds, and all the pollutions and infirmities of this fallen state. Their day will be perfected in the complete precipitation of all the vapors, and in the complete extinction of all the darkness, of this mortal state. What light, what revelation, will then be poured upon all things; on all the history of the providence of God towards this world, and towards each of his people; on all the doings of his grace towards every sinner; his holiness, his justice, his goodness, his long-suffering and his amazing love, in all their connections with man. What light around the cross! When Jesus manifested himself to Saul for his conversion, there was a light seen shining round about him, "above the brightness of the sun;" and then the sun was at high noon. What light, then, will that be, surrounding "the throne of God and the Lamb," when the day shall come, of which that manifestation to Saul was but a momentary glimpse; when all his people shall "see him as he is," in the glory which he had with the Father, before the world was! "The city had no need (said St. John in his vision of that heavenly bliss) of the sun to shine upon it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Had no need! Does the mid-day need a candle? Can you see the stars when the sun is high? How all present conceptions of that

day of glory will be lost in those revelations of God and of Christ, to which our present views are but as the dawn of thought in the mind of infancy.

But there is a great difference between the path of the Christian, going on to his reception into the glory of his God and Saviour, and the shining light increasing unto the perfect day. In the latter, there is so constant and gradual an increase unto the final consummation, that many of the last steps are not discernible from the terminating perfection. But the Christian's highest attainment, during the days of his growth in grace—how does it compare with the perfect day on which it joins? What is the holiness of the most eminent saint on earth, to the sanctification he will receive, when, at his passage to the inheritance of the saints in light, God will complete his meetness to be a partaker therein! We must see through a glass darkly, down to the very moment of our translation; and then, all at once, we shall see, "face to face," the glory of God, and the wonders of his kingdom. We must "think as a child, and understand as a child," down to the very moment of the time of our reception to be with Christ; and then, all at once, we are to put away childish things, and appear in the full stature, and think and understand with all the vigor of the most perfect manhood. What mysterious doings of grace—what marvellous operations of the Holy Ghost, must take place in the soul of the dying believer, after you have heard his last word, and caught his last look, and received his last bequeathed evidence that he dies in the Lord; and before he joins the hosts in light, and meets, face to face, the God of glory, and begins his eternal day in the presence

of the Lamb—oh! what a change, to make him capable of sustaining that wondrous vision, and meet to enter upon that inheritance! But that good work which marvellous grace began, the God of all grace will make perfect in that day.

And now, in conclusion, a few reflections derived from the view we have taken.

1st. We see what the heavenly state will be, in connection with the Christian life on earth. It is another life, and yet not another—the same life as that which dwells in the heart, and issues in the walk of the child of God during his present imperfectness; but now under a new dispensation, in another clime, under a brighter sky; as the perfect day, when the earth is filled with light, is the same day as when the first hours were struggling with the mists of morning. The religion of heaven is the religion of believers on earth; but with both its robes, its sanctification as well as justification, made perfectly white in the blood of the Lamb. The happiness of heaven is just the happiness of the believer on earth, only with all its impurities precipitated, all its feebleness removed, all its dimness of vision done away—the little stream wonderfully enlarged, but proceeding, as ever, out of its hidden source "with Christ in God;" *the hope* of the inheritance superseded by the *possession* of the inheritance; the priest who worshipped outside the vail, in types and shadows, now standing in the most holy place, directly before the throne. Grace is the dawn of glory—glory is the fullness of grace. Happiness in heaven is holiness made perfect in the communion of God. How vain, therefore, for a man to be hoping for heaven when he dies, in whom

the seed-life of heaven is not now begun! How impossible that a man should be happy in heaven, were he even taken thither, who has never learned to partake in the happiness of religion, before being taken thither! How can we ever reign in the life of glory, if we have not first served in the preparatory life of grace? Does morning light give assurance of the full grown day? Just as much does the latter tell you there has been a dawn of day—just as much does the blessedness of every saint in heaven testify that in him there was a new birth, by the power of the Holy Ghost, wherein the new life thus consummated above was begun in weakness on the earth.

2d. You have no reason to be discouraged about your state, when, at the outset of a Christian life, you feel your attainments in grace to be very poor and feeble. It may be "a day of small things," but it must not be despised. The perfect day was once but a streak of feeble light, scarcely visible amidst the powers of darkness with which it struggled for the mastery. Every saint now in heaven, rejoicing in all the maturity of his life in Christ, was once where you are, just beginning to learn, just trying to creep, just seeing a very little, with a very tottering faith, and a very infant hope. The hill of Zion must be ascended from the bottom of the valley; and many a step must be taken, without seeming to ascend at all. The great question is, Has the day begun, and is it striving, in the light and help of God, to increase more and more? In the faithful use of God's ordained means of grace, by prayer, by watchfulness, by looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher, by exercise of what you have, by

improvement of what you have obtained, you will go on from the good beginning in weakness, to the blessed consummation in perfectness.

3rd. Ye who earnestly desire never to cease advancing in holiness, till you are made perfect in heaven, remember where lies the power, whence cometh the light, who it is that is "made unto us, of God, sanctification and redemption." "Ye were sometime darkness; but now are ye light in the Lord." Mark, it is "*in the Lord.*" Your standing before God, as his people, is only as ye are "in Christ Jesus." Your increase in any of the endowments, hopes, or happiness of his people, can be only as ye are "in Christ Jesus." All your life is there; all your hope is there; all your righteousness is there. Growth in grace, is simply increased likeness to Christ, increased nearness to Christ, increased reliance upon Christ, increased desire after him, increased drawing by faith and prayer upon the treasury of grace in him. The crescent moon, all dark in itself, increases to its fullness of light as its face is turned to the sun. "Seek ye my face," is the exhortation. May the answer come from every heart among us, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

SERMON XVI.

THE BELIEVER'S ASSURANCE IN CHRIST.

ROMANS viii. 32.

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!"

THERE are two principal methods by which the believer may comfort his soul out of the treasures of the grace of God. One is, by the direct application to his own spiritual state, of those promises of the scriptures which are appropriate thereto. His wants cannot be so various but the scriptures furnish promises to meet them, nor so great and pressing but he may find strength and consolation enough in those promises to sustain his heart in peace. And happy he, in whom "the word of God dwells richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," and whose heart is habitually exercised, by devout meditation, in the practical use and personal application of its many "words in season." That man is always ready—when temptation assails, to stand in the whole armor of God; when duty calls, to be girt about with truth, for its longest and hardest path; when tribulation brings its darkness, to find the lamp that will light up his tabernacle; when fears come about him, to give to each of them a reason of the hope that is in him; and when his Lord cometh, and calleth for him, to take his shining lamp, trimmed and burning, and go forth to meet him.

The other method is, by calling to mind what God has already done for us; especially what he did for us when we were enemies, wandering further and further away from him, having no desire for his love, making the world our God; and thence arguing, how much more we may look for his compassion and grace, now that we have turned unto him, and embraced his promises. The believer remembers "the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged;" he considers the mercy that plucked him "as a brand from the burning;" that persuaded and enabled him, in his great sinfulness and weakness, to seek refuge for his lost soul in the righteousness of Christ; that put a new song into his mouth, and shed abroad in his heart the love and peace of God. And thence he argues with his soul—He that so pitied me and did such wonderful things for me when I loved him not, shall I not trust in him and cast every care upon him, now that he knows that I love him. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the help of my countenance and my God." So reasoned St. Paul: "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." And so again, in the text: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things!"

The great subject of the text, is the love of God to sinful and ruined man, in the gift of his Son Jesus Christ, to be a sacrifice for our sins; and the particular topics under which the text leads us to consider that love, are, *first*, the Person

whom God spared not; *secondly*, that unto which he was delivered for us all; and *thirdly*, the comforting inference thence arising.

I. *The Person whom God spared not.*

He "spared not *his own Son.*" These words are intended to impress us with a sense of the dignity and preciousness of him whom God delivered up for us all, and consequently with some conception of the cost of that great sacrifice for our sins. The inference, "*how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?*" depends entirely upon the sense in which we understand Jesus to be called God's "*own Son.*" If you give this title only an accommodated meaning, supposing Jesus to be entitled the Son of God, only as any mere man, sustaining a certain peculiar relation to God, might, in distinction from other men, be so called, without implying that there was literally any relation of nature to God which other men had not, then the force of the text is all destroyed. For when I have said to myself, "He that spared not that *man* on whom he hath conferred the adoption of a Son, but delivered him up for us all;" what basis have I laid for the Apostle's animating inference, "How shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" An actual Sonship, and that implying a dignity of nature, and a nearness to the Father, which cannot be in any merely created being, is necessary to the argument of the text.

We are well aware that Jesus is called the Son of God, sometimes, in the scriptures, with reference to his coming in the flesh, his being miraculously "conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary." So spake the angel to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon

thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Adam, for a similar reason, as he was the offspring of God by creation out of the dust of the earth, is called "the Son of God;"* while Seth, because he was not thus created, is called only the son of Adam.

But our Lord Jesus Christ is named in the scriptures, "the Son of God," in a sense in which none else can have that name, and by which he is the "*only-begotten* Son." We read in the text that God "*delivered up*" his own Son for us all. But this was done not merely when our Lord was delivered up to the ignominy and sufferings of the cross; but before that; when he was delivered up to take "the form of a servant," and to be so deeply humbled as to be "made in the likeness of men."† Thus it is written:—"Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." He was delivered up for us all, *when all that humiliation was laid upon him.* It was the preparation for the sacrifice afterward to be offered. But he who was thus delivered up was *then* God's "own Son." He did not become God's "own Son" by being delivered up; but he was that Son *when* delivered up. Thus we find his Sonship to have existed before he came into the world to save sinners. And hence we find the Sonship of Christ, which is spoken of in the text, to embrace all that infinite dignity of nature, in which the second person of the adorable Trinity existed, in the Unity of the Godhead,

* Luke iii. 38. † Phil. ii. 6, 7.

from all eternity; "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person."* The title, then, of God's "own Son" associates the person of our Redeemer with all that is unsearchable and infinite in the glory and majesty of Jehovah, and brings to our view, as setting forth his attributes, those passages of Scripture which speak of all things as having been made by him; and as consisting in him, and upheld by him; which moreover declare that he was "before all things;" that he is "above all things," and that "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" that the hearts of men are open to his sight, and that all the angels of God worship him.†

But it is not merely the infinite dignity and majesty of our Redeemer that we are led, by the language of our text, to contemplate. It was more than an infinitely exalted and glorious person, whom God delivered for us all. He "spared not *his own Son.*" It is the special relation which that glorious person sustained unto the Father Almighty, as *his Son*, "his *own*, his *only* Son," which is intended to make the deepest impression on our minds, of the wonderful grace and love of God in our redemption.

Have you never remarked, my brethren, how very frequent in the Scriptures is the use of the expression, *God's Son*, and equivalent phrases, in application to Christ; as if it were peculiarly an object of the inspired writers to make us always contemplate him, no matter in what other aspect of dignity he may be represented, as holding that *filial* relation to the Father which those words express?

* Heb. i. 3. † John i. 3. Col. i. 17. Heb. i. 3. John iii. 31. Col. ii. 3. Acts i. 24. Heb. i. 6.

Have you never remarked how peculiarly that method of speaking of Christ is used, when it is the special object of any portion of the scriptures, to set forth, as impressively as possible, what God did in giving *him* to bear our sins; and the wonderful love to us that led him to make that sacrifice; how it is then that the scriptures place him before us especially as the loving *Father*, and how he who comes to us as that great gift, is beheld as a most beloved Son from "the *bosom*"* of that Father, and not merely an infinitely exalted one from the majesty and glory of the Godhead? Take, as an example, that passage, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he first loved us, and sent *his Son* to be the propitiation for our sins." And another—"God so loved the world that he gave *his only-begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish," &c.† It is in this connection that our Saviour is called God's "*dear Son*;"‡ his "*own Son*;"§ his "*beloved Son*."‖ Twice while he was preparing for the sacrifice on the cross; first, at his baptism, then at his transfiguration, when he spake with Moses and Elias "of his death which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem," there came a voice from the glory of the Father, saying, "*This is my beloved Son*."** That voice from heaven never spake of him under any other name. Nor when the voice of Jesus ascended in prayer to God, is there a recorded instance of his using any form of address but that of *Father;* sometimes "Holy Father," or "Righteous Father,"—never any substitute for *Father*. Six times is that appellation used in that intercessory prayer

* John i. 18. † 1 John iv. 10. John iii. 16. ‡ Col. i. 13.
§ Rom. viii. 32. ‖ Mark i. 11. **Luke ix. 35.

which immediately preceded his being delivered up to be crucified. When his soul was in the agony of Gethsemane, his words were, "*O my Father*, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" and when on the cross he uttered, out of the depth of his sufferings, his prayer for his enemies, it was "*Father*, forgive them," and when he gave up his spirit in death, it was with the filial prayer, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." But why such an address to God, in such seasons of peculiar anguish, if not for precisely the same reason that a son on earth, the more he feels his heart drawn to his Father, will use those words of address to him which express most tenderly the emotions of a son? The filial relation of Son between Jesus and the Father Almighty is at least as real as that between any son and father on earth; it is the original of which such relationships here are but the faint copy; and we must take care lest in our thoughts we be unconsciously led to lose sight of this, by imagining that because in that divine relationship there is an infinite mystery, therefore there is a less literal reality. I would say the reverse. Instead of throwing unreality into that relation, as if it involved no such emotions, no such peculiar love and tenderness as that existing naturally between parent and son on earth; as if it were little else than a name or an abstraction, because the Father is the infinite God, and not the mortal man: it would seem rather to be our duty to endeavor to conceive of it as involving a Father's love and tenderness, only so much the more exalted in power and in intensity, as the infinite God is beyond the mortal man, in all the heights and depths of his nature. This view follows of necessity,

when you once admit that when the Scriptures speak of Christ as God's *own* Son, his *only*, his *beloved Son*, they represent a literal reality, without any limitation upon the usual meaning of such words; that when we read in the text that God "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all," we are not only allowed, but directed, to form our estimate of the cost of the sacrifice, by thinking of what it would cost one of us to deliver up a beloved son to such sufferings as Jesus endured, and by then adding to that cost of ours, the consideration that the Father as a Father, as *the* Father, from whom all parental love on earth is but the feeble derivative, as a ray of light from the sun, is as infinite in his *love* and *tenderness* as in his power and holiness. And how strikingly do you see this in that remarkable type of the sacrifice of Christ, which is presented in the narrative of Abraham offering Isaac his only son upon the altar.* There you see the venerable and devoted father, at the command of God, without a murmur, taking that only and beloved son, and going forth on the long journey to the distant mount of sacrifice, perfectly expecting there to slay his son; you hear those words from Isaac as they walk along, words so calculated to unman a father's strongest determination —"My father, behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" At length they reach the place, and you see Abraham building the altar and laying on it the wood, and then laying his son thereon, and binding him down; and no complaint is heard from the submissive son: and now the father's hand has taken the knife to slay him; the sacrifice is virtually made; the

* Gen. xxii.

suffering of Abraham was as agonizing as if he had actually slain his son. Who can tell what he suffered? How does the narrative, with particular intent, take care that, as we read it, we shall not for a moment lose sight of the fact that it is *a father not sparing his only son.* The command to Abraham was, "Take now *thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest.*" Every word of that command drew blood from that father's heart. In the conversation, as they go on their way, Isaac says, "*My father.*" Abraham answers, "*Here am I, my son.*" And when the trial is over, the blessing pronounced on Abraham begins with the preface, "Seeing thou hast not withheld *thy son, thine only son.*"* All this we find in the most distinct and impressive of all the types and promises of the sacrifice of Christ given to the Patriarchal Church; yea, in that very type in which Abraham was granted to see by prophetic exhibition the "day" of Christ "and was glad."†

And why all this, but that when we are considering the cost, and the dignity, and the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, and the love that provided it for us, and all the comforting inferences for the believer which flow therefrom, we should concentrate our attention mainly upon the *Sonship* of Christ; upon the fact that he was not merely "the brightness of the Father's glory,"—of the same essential divinity, but "his only begotten Son;" so that,—as it was so much the more wonderful evidence of the obedience of Abraham, that he withheld not *his son, his only Isaac whom he loved,* but delivered him for a burnt-offering at God's command, we should be the more deeply penetrated with a sense of the wonderful love of God to sinners, because "he spared not his own Son," so infinitely nearer and more

* Gen. xxii. 1—17. † John viii. 56.

beloved than ever any only son to a father's heart among men, "but delivered him up for us all."

And what thus is the great crowning glory of our redemption as respects the love that provided it, and the efficacy attending it, is the basis also of its crowning blessedness in regard to the benefits accruing therefrom to the believer. It is because Christ is God's "dear Son" in virtue of his divine nature, that sinners obtain, as united to him by a living faith, the relationship of God's *adopted* sons. Our redemption began with God's not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all. It will be completed in God's receiving believers as sons in Christ and for Christ's sake, and delivering all the glory of his kingdom unto them all. It was the Sonship of Christ that made his sacrifice so infinitely meritorious. It is the sonship of his people, by adoption in him, unto God, so that they are made "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ," that will make their everlasting portion so inconceivably glorious.

Let us now speak in the second place of,

II. *That unto which God delivered his own Son.*

We might survey the whole mission of Christ, from his being made in the form of a servant, till he rose from the dead, and say that unto all the humiliation, and labors, and sufferings of that period was he delivered. But as all had reference to, and were all completed in that one event, for which chiefly he took our nature, namely, *his death on the cross*, therefore we find in the scriptures, that his being delivered for us all, has reference mainly to that event; as when he said, "The Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men;* and, as when Peter said to

* Luke ix. 44.

the Jews, "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." * And, again, He "was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification;"† where "*delivered*" being put in opposition to being *raised again*, shows that it was deliverance unto death that was meant.

But our Lord Jesus endured that death as a penalty. It was the penalty of our sins. He "redeemed us *from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.*" Hence, as his death was the penalty imposed by the violated law, under which he was placed that he might redeem us from its curse, it is more proper to say that Christ was delivered *unto the law*, the broken law, to endure all its wrath, to exhaust all its curse, to pay all its demand against sinners, to make a perfect atonement for all our transgressions, in order that when that work was finished, he might "preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors" to all that are bound under its condemnation.

But let us consider all that is contained in this view. The law of God, just, and holy, and good, without imperfection, and on the supremacy and upholding of which, all things, in every gradation of God's intelligent creatures, depend, was broken and dishonored by man. Its penalty, pronounced upon every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, must be paid. It was not in the nature of law to "clear the guilty." Man, therefore, the sinner, was held under its arrest, under condemnation, in bonds, unto eternal death. That eternal death he must die, or a surety must satisfy, in his stead, the justice, and holiness, and majesty of the law. But

* Acts ii. 23. † Rom. iv. 25.

whence shall that surety be provided? Who could make atonement for the sins of the whole world? Who could receive and bear upon his soul "the iniquities of us all," of all ages; and so suffer for them, and so make propitiation, and impart to the propitiation such wonderful value, that no demand of the law should remain unpaid, no part of its curse uninflicted, no word of its commandment not perfectly honored and vindicated; yea, so that God might be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly? In the whole range of creation, among all the "principalities and powers in heavenly places," there was none competent to that office. The surety must come from above the rank of created beings, or not at all. Must he then come from the throne of God? The language of God to Abraham, when he demanded of him no less a sacrifice than his only son Isaac, we may, without irreverence, suppose to have been, in this emergency, addressed by the law to the love of God the Father Almighty: "Take thy Son, thine only begotten Son, whom thou lovest, and offer him up for a burnt-offering," and there shall be no condemnation to those that shall believe in his name.

And, wonderful to say, the boundless love of God consented. He beheld, infinitely more clearly than we now see it in the history, all that was to be endured by his own Son, if delivered up to that work of redemption—all the long descent of humiliation, from the throne of the Godhead to the ignominy of the cross; all the steps of sacrifice and suffering, from the day he took our nature in the virgin's womb to the day in which he arose in it from the grave. And for whom was such cost to be incurred? Ah! what a world he looked upon! "We were enemies." "All

we like sheep had gone astray." We desired not that God should reign over us. The world was one vast theatre of rebellion and corruption, deserving only God's wrath and damnation. And how perfectly did he search all its iniquity to its depth; and see it in all generations and in all hearts at one view; and estimate, as we cannot approach unto, all its vileness, ingratitude, and hatefulness, as it rose up against his authority—as it despised all his love—as it stood in awful contrast with his infinite holiness! And it was for such sinners, that he, or none, must find a ransom. Then he "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." The Son was first delivered up to be "*made of no reputation,*" by being made in "the form of a servant" and "the likeness of man," so that coming into the world in our nature, he might become "obedient unto death" for our sins. But no sooner did he thus become man, as the surety for all men, than the law recognized him in that mediatorial office, and began at once to lay upon him the iniquities of us all, and to wound him for our transgressions. All his way, from birth to crucifixion, that wounding went on. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him" continually, for he was all the while the "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and every sorrow was part of the price that bought our redemption, and every grief was an offering for us. At last he was delivered unto death. So perfectly was he delivered into the hands of the law, and held under its arrest in our stead, and treated as if all our sins were his, and thus identified with us as our surety, by whose stripes we are saved, that it is written he was "*made sin for us*" *—words which can be understood in no other sense than that

* Romans v. 21.

our sins were *imputed* to him, and he bore them as our surety under the vengeance of the law, as if they were personally his own.

Oh! how can we comprehend the depth and height of the love of God as thus manifested for us! Read it in its type—Abraham offering up his son. You see the venerable patriarch receiving the command, "take thine only son, whom thou lovest, and offer him up for a burnt-offering on one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." He rises "early in the morning" for the painful journey; cleaves the wood for the burning of the precious victim; keeps on, with his Isaac, those three long days of concealed anguish, towards the appointed place; every step a martyrdom, every thought a crucifixion; leaves the servants at a distance from the mount selected, lest they should prevent the sacrifice; takes Isaac alone, lays upon him the wood to bear it up the mount, takes in his own hand the fire and the knife, builds the altar, binds his son, and is just proceeding to slay; oh, how could mortal heart be strong enough for such obedience! How wonderful the love of Abraham to God, that he did not spare his only son, his beloved Isaac, the only heir of the promises made unto himself, but without a murmur delivered him to death by his own father's hand, because God commanded!

But let us turn to the antetype. How very "early in the morning" of the world's history did God begin, in his providence and grace, to prepare for the offering of the sacrifice of propitiation for our sins; for how many thousands of years was there one continual progress towards that wonderful offering; how was every step and arrange-

ment of God's dispensations directed with a view to that one great event; with what constancy of purpose all things were made to work together to bring it to pass! As in the journey of Abraham, there was carried the wood, the knife, and the fire, as well as the lamb for the offering; so from the beginning of the world's sinfulness, as God was bringing nearer and nearer the fullness of time, when his own Son should be actually offered up a propitiation for our sins, the signs of that promised sacrifice were seen by all generations of his Church, *the fire, the wood, the knife, and the victim,* all presented in that shedding of blood, for the remission of sins, and in that burning of sacrifices upon altars, which, from the offering of righteous Abel to the last in Jerusalem, before the vail of the temple was rent in twain at the death of Christ, foreshadowed, and kept up in the expectation of the Church, that one perfect and sufficient oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

At length "the fullness of the times" had come, and "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." Every step in the life of Jesus from that hour, was towards that mount which God had appointed for the offering. Every enemy was made a servant to help on the journey. Jesus bore the fuel of the burnt offering, in bearing our nature and our sins. But the fire and the knife to slay were in the Father's hand. The hour is come. The only Son of God is nailed to the cross, "by wicked hands," which accomplish unknowingly, "the determinate counsel" of the Father. Legions of angels there are to rescue him, if summoned; but, like the servants of Abraham, they are kept away. There is none to

help. The sword of divine justice is stretched forth in all its wrath against him, as our representative and substitute. He is "*not spared*" in the least. Every sin, of every soul, of every generation, with its whole penalty, is visited upon him, until the last drop of the bitter cup is drank, and the last jot and tittle of the exaction of the law is satisfied. He suffered to the uttermost, that he might "save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." To the most ignominious and the most painful death, was he delivered. Everything that accompanied it, all its accessories, all the stripes, and mockery, and revilings, the being crucified between two thieves, and regarded as a malefactor, all tell us how little the Father spared him, how entirely he delivered him up. The sharpest agony came when God the Father, for a time, did hide his face from his Son; thus treating him so entirely as we deserved to be treated, in whose place he suffered. Even that most inconceivable agony, the beloved Son was not spared. And then it was that there came that cry of anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

Ah! it is what gives that sacrifice its most affecting aspect, and declares most impressively how God regards the guilt of sin, and yet loves, and would save, the sinner, that, while to human eye there were no agents in the death and sufferings of Christ but *men*, and no causes of pain but such as their hands employed; the hand that really delivered him up—the unseen hand that really bound him and laid him on the altar, that gave him the bitter cup to drink, that kindled the fire of agony which burned in his very soul, was that of his *Father*. *He* "laid on him the iniquities of us all." "It pleased the

Lord, (said the prophet Isaiah), to bruise him, to put him to grief." It was he who made the soul of Jesus "an offering for sin."* And not till that offering had become a complete propitiation for the sins of the whole world; not till God's own Son, standing as our surety under the demands of the law, had satisfied them to the uttermost, did God spare him, or cease to put him to grief. But so soon as that price was paid, and that propitiation was *finished*, did the law remove its arrest, and the surety was justified from the imputed sins of men, and deliverance was given to him who had been bound under their condemnation. Then came forth the Lord of Glory from the bonds of death, having spoiled "principalities and powers," and "having blotted out the hand-writing that was against us, and taken it out of the way, nailing it to his cross."† Then ascended he up on high, "leading captivity captive," to "the joy set before him," for which he had "endured the cross, despising the shame." From that time, all things were ready for the preaching of the gospel of his free, and perfect, and glorious salvation to every creature. From that time, "the righteousness of God without the law has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe;"‡ a free and perfect justification from all sin to every soul coming unto, and with a penitent heart embracing, the mediation of Christ; so that "now there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" there is no such thing remaining to them, or possible unto them—all taken away, blotted out, nailed to the cross of Christ.

* Isaiah liii. 6, 10. † Col. ii. 14, 15. ‡ Romans iii. 21, 22.

III. Let us now, in conclusion, attend to the exceedingly comforting inference drawn by the Apostle from all this love of God in Christ Jesus: "*How shall he not with him also freely give us all things!*"

The apostle argues from the greater to the less. What has God done for us already? He has given us his beloved Son. Not only that—he delivered him up to all humiliation and suffering—yea, to be made sin for us; what now can we need that must not come immeasurably short of the preciousness of that gift? He gave that gift most *freely;* without money or price on our part; when we were enemies; when we desired not the knowledge of his ways; when every thing in us, and in the world invoked his wrath; and now that we have turned unto him and embraced his mercy in Christ, will he not *freely,* without any merit or price in us, as freely as he gave his Son for us, give us *all things;* all that we need for our present welfare and our eternal salvation? Shall we not be "justified freely by his grace" from all our sins, seeing he has so freely provided a perfect righteousness for our justification in Christ? Will he not most freely give us grace to help in time of need, seeing that his grace has already so abounded towards us, that he hath not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all? Will he not sustain us in death that we faint not; and lift us up above its waves, that we fear not; and then receive us graciously to all that glory which Jesus hath purchased and prepared for his people?

How strong is this method of consolation in lower relations! Suppose you should hear of a poor lost orphan child, carried far away into grievous bondage, and you

should feel so moved with compassion as to go a long journey, at a great sacrifice, to deliver him. You then take him to your home, adopt him as your son, and assure him that you will be to him a father. But bye and bye I find that child distressed. He thinks how little claim he has on your love, how little he can do to repay it; he says to himself—'Why should such as I be the object of such gratuitous affection? what if those who carried me away should be permitted to regain their captive? what if I should be suffered, at any rate, to come to want, and wander unfriended amidst the dangers and trials of this world?" Now, what could I do to that troubled heart, so calculated to lift it up in hope and confidence, as to say, "He that has already done for you so much, he that sought you out when a stranger—now that you are his adopted child, how shall he not most surely protect, and sustain, and cherish you!"

Such is a most feeble illustration, indeed, of the "strong consolation" which belongs to those who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them in Christ. The child of God has his fears and temptations. The future, between this and the grave, with all its anticipated and unanticipated trials; the future, beyond the grave, with its day of judgment and its eternal inheritance of bliss or woe, arises to fill his mind with care. "May not one so weak as I, be left to my own strength, when trials come, seeing I so much deserve it? Can I feel assured of grace according to my day, when already I have so much abused the grace of God? Will he accept such prayers as mine, which, though presented in repentance, looking only unto Jesus, and from a heart that does

love him, are so weak in every holy affection, and so polluted with sinfulness? Can I feel persuaded that I shall not be left to go down alone, unlighted, unsupported, into the valley and shadow of death? And when, in the great day, I stand accused by the broken law, and ten thousand thousand sins confront me, oh! will Jesus then remember me in his kingdom, and interpose his righteousness to shield and justify me?"

Under such thoughts, his soul tempted to be cast down and disquieted within him, the believer calls up the direct promises of the scriptures, and endeavors to cast all his cares upon God. But nothing enables him to do this with more sweet and sustaining consolation, than the thought of what the grace of God has already done on his behalf. What greater assurance could I have (he meditates) of inexhaustible love and grace, than that which meets me at every remembrance of the death of Christ? He saw me, a wandering, impenitent, disobedient, ruined sinner, my heart wholly alienated from him, my soul deserving to abide forever under his condemnation. Then he gave his own Son to bear my sins, that I might be received as his adopted child. Every conceivable gift of grace was contained and promised in that greatest of all possible gifts. What stronger assurance is possible? If, on the bosom of every cloud, I should see the tokens of his forgiving mercy; if all the angels of heaven should be despatched on purpose to tell me that God will never forsake me, but will freely give me all I need; yea, if at every step I should hear a voice from heaven, saying, "Let not your heart be troubled;" could all this be stronger than the single fact that God has al-

ready so loved me, that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the cross for me? Oh, no! hope thou in God. He that laid such a foundation, will surely enable thee to build thereon the "hope that maketh not ashamed." He who at such cost, hath opened for thee that new and living way, will not fail thee when thou needest and seekest his grace to walk therein. He who purchased for thee, at such a price, the incorruptible inheritance, surely, when thou seekest it in the way of his own appointment, will not fail, in his own time, to give thee possession? "All things are yours," Christian believer, because "you are Christ's, and Christ is God's."* Fear not, for "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." When his pleasure was, to put his people Israel in possession of the land of Canaan, and to give them the heritage of the heathen, if the Red Sea opposed their march, it was made to divide, and open their path; if a mighty host pursued them, they were made more than conquerors; if they wanted bread in the wilderness, the manna came down from heaven; if they wanted water, where all was dry, the flinty rock was made to yield it. So shall it be to the end of the world. Our Lord Jesus must "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." For that end, all that believe in him shall come to him, and be with him in his glory, joint heirs in his kingdom; and if all the angel-host be needed for their safety on the way, and all the riches of grace be required for their journey to the heavenly country—all are theirs; given already, most freely, in the greater and all-containing gift of God's own Son.

*1 Cor. iii. 21, 23.

Then, Christian brethren, let us comprehend the breadth and length of the grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Let us catch some of the abounding joy of that Apostle, who so well knew in whom he believed, and so felt the certainty of what he believed, concerning the freeness and fullness of the salvation of God to all believers. "Who is he that condemneth? (he cries;) it is Christ that died. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

But, brethren, to be allowed thus to live in triumphant elevation above all fears of death and hell, in joyful assurance of the love of God as our portion forever, is indeed a "high calling," a "holy calling," and requires of us that we walk worthily thereof. I have time only to speak of one particular of a worthy walk according to such vocation.

Freely hath God provided for us all things in Christ, and *freely* will he give us all things with him, and therefore *freely* should we *seek* all things thus laid up for us, and waiting our earnest and faithful application. Such abounding treasures, offered so freely, demand of us corresponding desires, large expectations, large prayers. Among the "all things" provided, is not only a free and complete justification to every believer, grace to help in every time of need, consolation in all affliction, strength for all duties,

* Romans viii. 33–39.

and all we can want in the hour of death; but "*the Spirit of holiness*" to carry on in our hearts the work of righteousness, and to "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," till we are made perfect in the image of God. Next to Christ himself, there is nothing so precious as that Spirit of holiness. Among the *all things* which God will give us with Christ, nothing should we so desire, in union with his righteousness to justify, as his Spirit to sanctify us. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after that free gift of God in Christ. Let your hearts pant after it! Let your prayers importunately beg for it. The more you seek, the more will come. God has most freely provided the treasury. You must most freely, largely, earnestly, draw thereon, in your prayers and expectations; standing at the door and knocking till it is opened; using every receipt of grace as the argument only to make you wait upon God the more continually, and knock at the door of his treasury the more importunately, for additional gifts of every grace.

But if God spared not his own Son from being a sacrifice for our sins, shall we spare our sins, that cost such sacrifice? Must we not hate them, and be humbled for them, and take every method to put them to death, as most vile and abominable? "*He who knew no sin, was made sin for us.*" It was therefore *we* who, by our sins, did adjudge and sentence him to death. The raging Jewish priests were our agents. The Roman soldiers were our representatives. Our sins, it was, that cried out, *Crucify him, Crucify him!* with demands more insatiable than all the multitude that followed him to Calvary. Not so much therefore upon Jewish murderers, as upon our

sins, let us turn our indignation, and discharge all the resentment our hearts can feel, most freely condemning them, and striving to put them to death, as we joyfully hope freely to be justified from all of them through the atoning death, and the ever-living intercession, of our Lord Jesus Christ.

One word more. Brethren, did God indeed deliver up his own Son for us all, and must we not all, under the sense of deepest indebtedness, under the constraining force of the most earnest thankfulness, deliver up ourselves unto God in return, as the least we can offer him? Shall we think of a divided heart for the sacrifice of thanksgiving? Shall we profess to lay down all we owe at his feet, and yet keep back part of the price? Shall we allow the world to share where God has such claims on all? Will you bring the lame, and the halt, and the blind, to his service, when the blood of Christ has purchased all you have, all you can do, and when all must come so immeasurably short of the cost of the purchase? "I beseech you, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies, yourselves, your hearts, and lives, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ," for that only is "your reasonable service." May the Spirit of the Lord come down upon all of us, to make us dead to sin, and alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

SERMON XVII.

THE BELIEVER'S PORTION IN CHRIST.*

COLOSSIANS i. 12.

"Give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

IT is as much the duty of the Christian to give thanks, as to pray, unto the Father. If we are commanded to "*pray without ceasing*," we are also commanded "*in everything to give thanks*." In everything, it is a great matter of thankfulness, that we are permitted, enabled, and so graciously encouraged, to pray. A sinner permitted to live under the invitations of the Gospel, instead of being condemned to live eternally where only the wrath of God abideth, can never in anything lack a theme of thanksgiving. But a sinner whose heart has been drawn by the grace of God to the embracing of the invitations of the Gospel; whose heart has been so changed by the power of God, that he is now made *meet* to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light, having in that very condition of his heart, the indwelling earnest and witness of the Spirit that he will finally become a partaker in that glorious inheritance; he surely must in everything give thanks; no adversity, no affliction, must ever hide from his sight his boundless debt of praise, to the riches of

* Preached at St. Dunstan's-in-the-West, London, May 8, 1853.

the grace of God to his soul; all his life long, he must be so deeply sensible of the preciousness of his hope in Christ, and of the wonderful mercy of God in bringing him thereto, out of the sinfulness and condemnation of his unconverted state, as to make it his heart's delight to give thanks unto the Father, who thus hath made him "meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light."

In considering the words of the text, let us attend:

I. *To the manner in which the future blessedness of the people of God is presented:* an "*inheritance*"—"the inheritance of *the saints*"—"the inheritance of the saints *in light.*"

The portion of the people of God is an *inheritance.* They are called elsewhere, "heirs of salvation," "heirs of the kingdom." "He that overcometh, shall *inherit* all things." Christ will say to his people in the last day: "Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." *

Now there is a great Gospel truth contained in this word *inheritance.* It teaches that the future portion of the righteous, is not their *purchase.* They do not obtain it on the basis of merit, but of relationship. They do not make themselves heirs; but they are made heirs by the will and favor of their Heavenly Father. A father makes a son his heir, not because the son has merited the inheritance, but because he is a son, a dear son. Thus it is written: "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." †

* Heb. i. 14; James ii. 5; Rev. xxi. 7; Matt. xxv. 34. † Rom. xvi. 17.

If children of God, then heirs of God—children by adoption, taken up out of a miserable beggary, and adopted as God's dear children, and thus made inheritors of himself as our boundless portion. But this is not all: "*joint heirs with Christ.*" If God's children, then Christ's brethren; and in virtue of that union with Christ, we inherit jointly with him. In ourselves, we can have no title to the inheritance. In Christ, the only begotten Son of God, the sons, by adoption, have a most perfect, indefeasible title. He, in his mediatorial office, is "*heir of all things.*"* We, in him, shall inherit all things. Thus it is that such glorious things are spoken of the future possession of his people. "To him that overcometh," he saith, "I will grant to sit with me on my throne;"† not merely in my kingdom, but on my throne; not merely to share the blessings of my kingdom, but to share the glory of its king; my brethren in glory, my joint heirs in all that I inherit of my Father. Thus it is written, that "his people shall reign with him," "shall be glorified together" with him, and that God doth make them "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." In the last day, when our Lord shall be receiving his people to himself, his words to each will be, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," into mine own joy, which thou dost inherit, because thou art in me and I in thee. And when he shall have thus gathered together all his beloved ones that believe in him, to be with him where he is, to be glorified with him and in him, then shall his own inheritance of joy be completed in their salvation and blessedness—all having come, "in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God,

* Heb. i. 2. † Rev. iii. 21

unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."*

And thus we see how much of the portion of the people of God in the world to come, is described, in its being called an *inheritance*. It teaches how that portion is all of grace; how it results simply from our having received "the adoption of sons;" how necessary as the evidence of our title is "*the spirit of adoption*" in our hearts; and how, since our inheritance is a joint inheritance with that of Christ, we must look only to his merits for the title, and to a vital union with him through faith that we may share therein. It teaches, moreover, what St. Paul calls the "*riches of the glory*" of that inheritance. What description of *riches of glory* can exceed that of simply telling us we shall be "*joint heirs with Christ?*"

We have in the text another feature of the future bliss. It is called the "inheritance of *the saints*."

The saints are the "sanctified in Christ Jesus." To none else is the inheritance, and in that exclusiveness do we see much of its excellence. It is thus an inheritance "*undefiled*." None are there but those whom God hath perfectly sanctified. All there have "the mind of Christ in its perfectness." It is a Church which he hath sanctified and cleansed, "that he might present it unto himself, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Sin enters not into that inheritance, sorrow goes not thither. Tears have no fountain there. "No spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing" upon the white raiment of that holy fellowship. Holy ones made perfect are the only dwellers there. "The former things are passed away." The Church of Christ will not then be as now, a

* Eph. iv. 13.

church defiled; tied to a body of death; the living mingled everywhere with the dead; the Christian of a vital faith, and the Christian of a mere lifeless form, united under the same profession of discipleship; the children of this world communing outwardly with the true, but imperfect family of God. Oh! no. Nor will the true Church be then so far defiled as to contain any such members as its best are in this life; holy indeed essentially, but so imperfectly holy; saints indeed, because truly sanctified in Christ Jesus—but saints conscious of coming so far short in holiness, that they seem to themselves to be all spot and wrinkle, and every such thing. All things will then have become new—not only as being holy, but as being all perfectly holy. "*The spirits of just men made perfect*," is the description of that fellowship. Oh! it is precious to think of a heritage so excluding all unholiness. But it is most alarming for you, my hearers, in whom the work of holiness is not commenced.

While however it is good to think of that inheritance as *exclusive* of all but saints, we love to think of it as *inclusive* of all that are saints. We drop our denomination uniform when we undress at the grave. It belongs to those things that are seen and are *temporal*. We enter into eternal life in no raiment but the white robe of Christ, which is the righteousness of all that are sanctified in him, and belongs to those things which are unseen and *eternal*. If it be necessary to this most imperfect state of the Church, that we should be divided as we now are; it is good to think of it as a humiliation which can last only while we are here. The grave will cover it with our corruptible bodies. The only name to be inquired for, in ascertain-

ing the inheritors of Christ, is *saints*—the sanctified—those who have been born again of the Spirit of God, and are walking in newness of life. Bring them from the east, and west, and north, and south—from all generations, from out of all divisions of the Christian family, from under any name, or form! Each has his lot in that good land. All inherit by the same title in Christ; and therefore all "*inherit all things.*" In the poverty of earthly inheritances, the more one heir obtains, the less all others have. But in the fullness of the inheritance of the saints, each inherits all, as if there were no heir but himself—or rather because all inherit as one body in Christ. Oh! it is a most blessed heritage that shall assemble together in one most affectionate, holy, household; such a boundless fellowship of the people of God, out of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues; all seeing eye to eye; all feeling heart to heart; all children of the same redeeming grace; all brethren of the same wondrous adoption in Christ; all most glorious in his likeness; "the communion of saints" in its perfectness; "the Catholic Church" in its fullness; "the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven."

But there is another feature of the inheritance. It is the inheritance of the saints *in light.* In light! What so pure as perfect light? Whence all the varied beauties of nature, but from light? Light is an expression for God himself, its Maker. "*God is light.*" It describes his people here; they are "*children of light.*" It describes their progressive advancement in grace; their path is pictured in scripture "as the morning light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And here

it describes their future glory, when their path shall have reached meridian—the perfect day; they shall be saints *in light.* God is light; and they shall be like him, and see him as he is.

But how shall we understand this description of the inheritance? I read it as having reference to the comparison between the perfect state of the saints in heaven, in point of spiritual knowledge, and their imperfect state while here on earth; just what the same Apostle referred to, when he said, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now we know in part; then shall we know even as we are known." Now we see by aid of a glass—a revelation, an instrumental medium. We see at a distance, at second hand. A thousand motes and mists hinder our vision of spiritual and eternal things. Constant vapors rise up from earth and our own evil natures, to obscure our vision. At best, we know but in part—nothing entirely; nor can we know how little we are capable of knowing of that boundless field. But then we shall see face to face, in open, boundless vision. We shall dwell with God, in the light which no man can now approach unto. We shall know without tuition, see without a medium, understand without interpreter—"*saints in light.*"

Thus I understand that description of the city of God in the Revelation of St. John. "The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." *

God is light—its fountain, its fullness; and what need of

*Rev. xxi. 23, 24.

lesser lights in heaven, when he is there? They will need no sun nor moon; in other words, no intervening medium of communication from God to them. Their communion with "God and the Lamb" will be "face to face." *Now*, we do need the aid of the sun and moon—we depend upon secondary lights. In this world we must walk by faith, not by sight, and must have the aid of *means* of grace. What are the ministers of the word; what the sacraments of the Church; what the revelation contained in the scriptures, but parts of a system of *instrumental* secondary lights, teaching us that we see not yet face to face; that however great our knowledge and privileges, compared with what they would have been without those aids; however sufficient and most precious our revelation for all the present necessities of the soul, we are far yet from the perfect day. Ministers, and sacramental signs, and a written inspired word, are marks of the Church in the wilderness. God is with her, but in the pillar of cloud. They are marks of a state of grace not yet complete. God is communicating with his people, but it is from behind the veil of the inner sanctuary. But the Church in glory will have no need of human ministry, nor of visible signs of spiritual grace, nor of an inspired book, revealing, under the imperfections of human language, the things of the Spirit of God. The saints being "heirs of God," their portion will be therefore his fullness. God is light—original, perfect, boundless light. They will commune directly with that light, that holiness, that truth, that infinite knowledge, that boundless wisdom. They will be saints in light, because saints in the full vision of God. In contemplating that blessed estate, Isaiah dipped his pen in the same

effulgence as St. John, and wrote: "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither shall the moon give light unto thee, but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."* How sweet that sentence, "*the days of thy mourning shall be ended.*" St John's account of it is: "*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*" We know not which description is the most engaging—that of the evangelical prophet, or of the prophetic evangelist? Neither could speak of the light of that inheritance of the saints, without telling how it would banish all the sorrows which sin has brought upon our hearts, even to the drying up of the last tear; just as all the remnants of night, even to the last drop of dew, are wiped from the face of nature by the radiance of the sun.

But we must come to the second division of our discourse. St. Paul, in the text, unites with his fellow Christians in giving thanks unto the Father, because he had made them *meet*, or fit—qualified in spirit, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints. And from this we take our second head.

II. We cannot partake in that blessedness, unless we are first, by the transforming grace of God, in this present life, *made meet* for it.

One would suppose it could hardly be needful to use many words to demonstrate so plain a truth. We really partake in nothing unless we are meet to be partakers. A sick man cannot partake in a sumptuous feast. It will not be a feast to him; he is not meet for it. A man without an ear attuned to musical sounds, may sit in the

*Isaiah lx. 20, 21.

midst of the richest harmonies; but he cannot partake in them, however he may hear them. Take a man of grovelling mind, and place him in a circle of the most refined and intellectual; bid him associate his mind with theirs. You might as well command the deaf to hear, or the blind to see. How irksome that company! You easily perceive the reason. His mind is not fitted, his tastes are not qualified, for such privileges. Well, then, suppose I should find a little company of saints made perfect, come down from heaven, on some errand from God, to earth, and keeping here for a little while their endless Sabbath of holiness and happiness, as they keep it in heaven; and suppose I should take a man of the world, such as we meet with everywhere—his affections all running upon earthly things, all confined to earthly things, and set him down in that circle, and say to him, "Now, partake in their happiness. You think that all you need to make you happy hereafter, is only to be admitted to heaven. Try! Here is a little of heaven; join those blessed ones in their joys, in their sweet communion with God; in their overflowing love to Christ; in their praises to him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood, and hath made them kings and priests unto God." Why, one might as well speak to the dead. Not a chord is there in his heart to harmonize with their joys. He is all strange in his sympathies to them, and they to him. How would he like to have nothing else but their company and their pleasures, with his own present dispositions, forever and ever? What heaven would that be to him? His whole moral being must be changed, before he can be meet to partake with the saints of God on high in their holy blessedness. And so long as that change is not

wrought, no decree of God is needed to shut him out of the presence of his glory, or the fellowship of the heavenly host. A decree powerful enough is written in the man's own affections. His own heart excludes him. A mere title to heaven would not help him. What if he should even be allowed to come to the table of that heavenly feast? He could not partake. He would sit there all deaf, and dumb, and dead, amidst boundless life.

My dear hearers, let us well understand what constitutes salvation. Two things are essential, and both are brought to view in the connection of our text. St. Paul, speaking of Jesus, says: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even *the forgiveness of sins*." That is one of the two—*forgiveness of sins*. It opens the door to the habitation of the saints in light. Very precious, indeed, but it is not all. Then, in the text, we have those who have obtained the forgiveness of sins, that open door, now giving thanks for another thing, namely, that they have been made "*meet to be partakers* of the inheritance" to which that door admits them. That is the second of the two great gifts which make up our salvation. The one removes the barrier on the side of the broken law; the other, the barrier on the side of our own corrupt, carnal nature. The first is taken away in God's being reconciled to us through the mediation of Christ. The second is taken away in our hearts being reconciled to God by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. They come inseparably. Neither is ever without the other. They come both out of the great sacrifice on the cross. Faith draws both together from him who "was wounded for our transgressions, and by whose stripes we are healed"—"*the water*

and the blood." Whom God justifies, he also sanctifies. In whom these two are united, the forgiveness of sins and the meetness for the inheritance, in them is salvation. They are *saints*. In whom both are perfected, salvation is consummated. They are *saints* made perfect.

But what is that meetness for the inheritance of the saints? It is surely *likeness* to the inheritance. It is conformity of our affections to the nature of the blessedness. Is that blessedness the presence and glory of God? Then the meetness for it is to be holy, since God is holy. Is it a joint inheritance with Christ? Then to be meet for it, is to be like Christ; to have his mind in us, that his joy may be in us. It is to be assimilated to him in our affections, that we may be associated with him in his heritage. It is to be not of the world, even as he is not of the world. It is to have our affections set on things above, "where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." It is to be "dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is to love the will and service of God as our present happiness; to know by our present experience the sweetness of communion with him as his own children; to have such a sense of the preciousness of Christ to our souls, that we can participate with some degree of real consciousness in that declaration of the early believers: "Whom, having not seen, we love; in whom though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Vast, indeed, is the difference between that meetness for the inheritance which believers in their highest sanctification, this side the grave, possess, and that of those who have not entered into possession. It seems, indeed, that

it must take a mighty work of grace to make any Christian now on earth, with all our infirmities and remaining sinfulness, capable of the presence of God in his manifested glory. So it must, unquestionably. The eye that has never seen "the things of the Spirit of God" but "through a glass darkly," must needs undergo a mighty change of capacity before it is capable of looking on all those wonderful and glorious mysteries, face to face. The heart that has never communed with the holiness and majesty of God, but on this side the veil, must needs be prepared with a vast measure of new adaptation before it can bear to be introduced to the presence of that unveiled, infinite holiness and glory, on which even the seraphim look not with open face.

But the change required is only like that of a child that is now meet essentially for the inheritance of his father, because he is a true child, with all the faculties of a child; but who must attain to manhood, and have all those faculties matured, before he can be ready to enter into full possession of the inheritance. What would you say of the meetness of an infant to possess, and manage, and enjoy, a magnificent estate inherited from his father? But in one most important sense that infant is meet. He has the mind—he has the faculties. All he wants is, their development, their ripening, their manhood. The essential preparation he has. It is only the perfecting he needs. You have not to change what he is, but simply to mature it.

And thus we understand the present meetness of the Christian in the imperfectness of his earthly state, for the presence of the glory of God in heaven. What though

but the youngest child in grace, however old in years—just born again of the Spirit—just beginning the experience of newness of life—every affection and faculty of his heart in infant feebleness, but all nevertheless in living reality? Great indeed is the growth he must make, now that he has just opened his eyes upon such light as comes to us here in this moonlight night, before he can be qualified for the light of that city, where moon and sun are invisible by reason of the light of the unveiled countenance of God.

But still we can join that child in grace in giving thanks unto the Father who *hath* (already) made him "meet to be a partaker with the saints in light." He is meet, because he is God's regenerate and adopted child. He is meet, because he has all the mind, and heart, and sympathies, and relations, of a child of God. He is meet, essentially, though not maturely. The time to enter upon the inheritance has not yet come. He who has now given him the spirit of adoption, and made him his child, when that time does come, will give him the spirit, and stature, and perfectness, of a full-grown son, that he may inherit the kingdom prepared for him. As his day, so shall his grace be. Meanwhile, his calling is that of a child of God in minority and pupilage; to see the inheritance only in reversion, and in the distance; to live in the hope of it, and to be educated for it; and God giveth him grace for *that* need. When his calling shall be to go hence from the nursery of spiritual childhood, and take his place in the full citizenship of "the commonwealth of Israel;" to stand in the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn" in heaven; to minister as one of the "royal priest-

hood" in the immediate presence of the Majesty on High, then also shall his grace be as his day. His meetness will grow with his privilege. When God shall take him to the highest place, he will bring forth the best robe and put it on him.

Oh! but what a difference there is between the change which that child of God must undergo to make his present feebleness of holy attainment meet for the fullness of the future inheritance; and, on the other hand, the change that must take place in that man, in whom not a feature, not an affection, not a sympathy, not a faculty, of the child of God has ever found a place. In the former case, it is only a change from morning to noon—the day is the same. It is only a transition from the child to the man; the being is the same. But in the latter, it must be a change from night to day, from death to life; from the man who is in no sense a child of God, to the man who is in everything his living, loving child. In the former case, death is the certain introduction to the full completion of the glorious advancement. In the latter, death, finding the essential change not made, sets the seal to the certainty of its never being made to all eternity.

And now, would you be told how that meetness for the inheritance of the saints is obtained? I answer, it is no endowment of our natural state. All the meetness of this fallen and depraved nature of ours is for the inheritance of the unholy in darkness everlasting. The mind that is in man by nature, and the mind that is in the wicked and lost in hell, is essentially the same mind; just as the mind of the Christian here, and of the saint with God, is essentially the same. I doubt not there is an

awful maturity of wickedness in hell, for which the unregenerate in this world are not prepared in point of present growth. It would shock them, were it now seen by the worst of them: just as in "the brightness of the Father's glory," as seen by the saints in light, there is a manifestation for which the regenerate on earth, in point of maturity of grace, are not meet. But in every unregenerate man here, there is "the carnal mind," which "is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." That is all that is needed. The meetness for the fellowship of the lost is thus in him essentially. It needs but development. Change of worlds, from a place of hope to a prison of despair; from a condition of a thousand corrective and restraining influences, to one where none exist, and where every pent-up corruption of the heart is set loose, and set on fire, to range and rage without limit—such change will soon consummate the meetness of a lost soul, for all the wickedness and misery of the outer darkness.

Do you ask again, whence comes that essential meetness for the inheritance of the saints, which I have described as the possession of every child of God in this world? The answer is in our text. St. Paul, with his fellow Christians, said, "Giving thanks *unto the Father, which hath made* us meet," &c. They ascribed all they had of preparation for the inheritance, to the power of God. He *made* them what they were, as Christians. "We are *his workmanship*, (they said) created in Christ Jesus."

So mighty a change as that which forms out of such a being as man, in all the depravity of his natural heart, a being meet to associate with Christ and his saints, they

could ascribe to no power less than God's. He who created man originally in his own likeness, that he might qualify him for his own fellowship, now that we have lost that likeness, must by the same power create us anew, or we cannot be heirs of God. Hence that strong declaration, "If any man be in Christ;" if out of all mankind there be a true Christian, a child of God, a joint heir with Christ, "*he is a new creature.*" The work that made him what he is, was a new creation. The power that made him what he is, was the power that created the heavens and the earth.

Of the like testimony are these joyful words of St. Peter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." What prepared them for such an inheritance? They were "begotten again." Who accomplished that new birth in them? "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," in his abundant mercy. That new birth made them his children. That relation of children connected them with the inheritance. "If children, then heirs." Invert this sentence and it will be equally true and important—If heirs, then children. Add—If children, then begotten again by the Spirit of God. Add further—If not so begotten again, then ye cannot see the kingdom of God.

Oh, what alarming conclusions necessarily follow from all we have said, in regard to the hopelessness of those of you, my hearers, in whom no such inward, transforming work of grace is found! How painful to be obliged to

draw such lines of exclusion from the blessed heritage in prospect. But we have this alleviation and comfort, that the line is not yet so drawn as never to be crossed. You that find it marking you off from the fellowship of the kingdom, you may cross it yet, if you will strive; the hand of God is outstretched to lift you over when you strive. And it is by this painful plainness in drawing that line before you, and showing where it places you, that we hope, by the blessing of the Holy Ghost, to contribute to the raising up of a fixed determination in your hearts, that by the grace of God you will overpass it, and so gain a place among the inheritors of life.

But what precious encouragement and assurance there is in all we have said, to those who, having the love of God in them, and habitually loving his ways, are thus prepared essentially to be with him in glory. Their pleasure of heart in his word and worship, and whole service; their love of holiness, and earnestness to have more holiness, is "the earnest of the Spirit." It witnesses with their spirit, that they are children, and therefore heirs of God. The Lord "gives grace and glory;" glory, the maturity of grace; grace, the promise and preparation for glory; both where there is either. The one, the first fruits of the Spirit; the other, the fullness of the ripe harvest of grace. As sure as we have now the one, we shall hereafter possess the other. The heart that ascends to God amid the infirmities of the flesh, will go to God when the flesh shall encumber it no more. To be meet for the inheritance, is the assurance of obtaining it. He that fashions you for it, will certainly take you to it.

Then be joyful in God, and praise him for the riches of his grace! So run that ye may obtain. So seek that ye may find. So press toward the mark of the prize, that ye may be sure of the blessedness promised to him that endureth to the end. Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

THE PRESENT BLESSEDNESS OF THE DEAD IN CHRIST.

REV. xiv. 13.

"I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them."

THE dead! Where are they? In what state are they? What innumerable connexions unite them to us! They have gone where we are soon to go. They are, as we are soon to be. Especially the dead in Christ—what bonds unite them to those here who are alive in Christ—all one family still! What is their state? Where are they? It is of them the declaration of our text was written. It is of the dead as they now are before the resurrection, and not as they will be after the resurrection, that the text speaks. After the resurrection, they will be the *living* as they never were before; not only alive in the body, as well as in the spirit, and alive for evermore; but alive in a power and perfection of life altogether new. To them, in that day, there will be "no more death." It is therefore of the disembodied state of the people of God, to whom, as regards their bodies, there is yet death, that the text speaks. Their "earthly house of this tabernacle" has been dissolved. They are "absent

from the body." What a world of intelligent, spiritual beings are the disembodied dead! Think that not one soul that ever came into life since the human family began its generations, has ceased to live. They have passed out of sight to us—they have passed out of *this* life—this life in the body; this life of preparation for another; but not one ever passed out of life. What an inconceivable multitude are the millions that now people this earth! But what are they to those who once were here and are now gone away, and are living, in thought, in recollection, in happiness or suffering, as really as any of us. What tides of living men have the passing generations been pouring into that world, millions on millions since death began, and the first grave was made. On one side or other, of one great line of separation, they are all found. It is the same precisely that now separates into two great divisions all that live yet in the flesh. It is the only distinction among us that will survive us when we are gone hence. High or low, princes or peasants, in riches or in beggary; all such distinctions perish when we are laid in the grave. But there is one that lasts forever and runs its line among the disembodied that are waiting the resurrection, as universally as it now divides this congregation. The two classes into which it separates us here, are they that are *in Christ*, and they that are *not in Christ*. The classes beyond the grave, are they that *died in Christ*, and they that *died out of Christ*. There is not a soul in that world that comes not under one or the other of those denominations. We are led by the text to speak of the present state of those who belong to the former class—the dead in Christ—those "*who died in the Lord*."

I. *What is it to die in the Lord?*

It is the last act on earth of *being* in the Lord. It is to cease our Christian race as we began it, and as we ran it; it is to be found when the messenger of death comes for us, just where every call of duty, every trying providence, every temptation, every mercy, ever since we began the life of faith, found us—*in Christ.* It is not the getting into some new shelter; it is not the putting on some new armor; it is not the coming of the Christian into some new relation to Christ. It is the enduring to the end, of a relation formed when the Christian life began. It is the abiding of the soul in the ark which it entered when first it renounced the world. It is the having on of that whole armor of God which we put on when first we became soldiers of Christ. It is the Christian going through the valley and shadow of death, precisely as he went through the dangers, and trials, and sorrows, and duties, of this mortal life, saying, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want;" leaning on the hand of that Shepherd, and saying, "Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me." It is faith overcoming, in the last conflict, precisely as it overcame in every precious conflict of the Christian's pilgrimage—the same faith, resting on the same promises, embracing the Saviour just as ever before; passing through the Jordan as it passed through the Red Sea and the wilderness, "*looking unto Jesus.*" It is the child of God falling asleep in the same arms of redeeming love in which he was always embraced, and where always he was safe in the peace of God. But we must be more particular. "There is now no condemnation (saith the Apostle) to them that are *in Christ Jesus.*" *In Christ* and a *Christian* are the same

state. We have no beginning of Christian life, we have no nourishment of Christian life, none of its consolations, none of its hopes, none of its strength, none of its armor, except we be *in Christ Jesus*. But once there, we are in possession of all that belongs to the preciousness of the Gospel; condemnation is no more; there is grace sufficient for us to live by, and die by; and we have the inheritance incorruptible reserved in heaven for us—all in Christ, and all ours because we are in him.

Is Christ our refuge? We are in him when we flee to him, as Noah fled to the ark. Is Christ our Surety and Advocate? We are in him when we commit the cause of our souls before the judgment seat to him, and thus embrace him as our Representative. Is Christ our Life, whereby alone we can live a life of holiness unto God? We are in him, as the branch is in the vine, when we receive his Spirit, and are thus made to live by his life. Is Christ our Righteousness? We are in him when, being united to him by receiving his Spirit, all his merits as our Mediator, his death for our sins, and his obedience unto the law, are imputed unto us, and so we are clothed upon with his righteousness, as our justification before God. That, on the part of Christ, which thus unites us to him as our Refuge, Surety, Advocate, Righteousness and Life, is his Spirit abiding in us. That, on our part, which unites us to him, is our *faith*. The life which the Christian lives in the flesh, is "a life of faith on the Son of God"—all that Christian life, from its first breath to its last, from its first partaking of Christ, to its departure in Christ; in its inward partaking of his Spirit and its outward manifestation of his grace; in all its works, and hopes, and strength,

and growth, its conflicts and final victory—all is simply a life of faith, and of faith leaning on, uniting unto, and deriving from Christ. Nothing else on our part makes us to be in Christ. That faith begun, we are in him, before God. Thus is the sinner a Christian. His continuance as a Christian is simply the continued exercise of that same faith. His progress in the Christian life is just the increase of the strength of that same faith. It is faith working more and more by love, and exhibiting the fruits of the Spirit more and more maturely and abundantly. It is the daily repetition of precisely those exercises of faith wherein the Christian life began; each increasing with its exercise, trusting more simply in Jesus, drawing upon his grace more freely, obeying his will more implicitly, walking more closely with him, living more faithfully unto him, and thus till death. You remember that bright constellation of patriarchs, and prophets, and martyrs, which St. Paul has grouped together so beautifully in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, as illustrations of faith. You remember how he begins with, "By faith, Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." By faith, (he goes on to say,) Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Moses, and a great multitude, of whom the world was not worthy, lived, and labored, and denied themselves, and suffered, and fainted not. These all *lived by faith.* The apostle sets down all their faithful examples to a life of faith. Then he adds: "*These all died in faith.*" I know not a better illustration of the connection between a Christian death and a Christian life; between living in the Lord and dying in the Lord. Where faith led them, death found them. On the field of their war-

fare, in the armor of their confidence, ready for a longer contest, if duty called, they died. The promises that sustained them in the trials of life, were their strong consolation in the conflict of death. Their faithful death was just the continuance of their life of faith, uniting it to the life of eternal blessedness with God.

But the same Apostle has in another place so striking an illustration of the doctrine we wish to impress on your minds, that we cannot refrain from presenting it. You know his stirring account, in the Epistle to the Philippians, of his own earnestness on the very subject before us, namely, that he might die in the Lord. You remember that verse: "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but dung, that I might win Christ, and be *found in him.*" *Found in him!* Here, you perceive, is precisely what we are speaking of. To die in the Lord, is at death to *be found in him.* Paul valued all things as utterly worthless, in comparison with that. Does he tell us what it is to be *found in him?* Yes; in the very next words: "That I might win Christ, and be found in him, *not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law; but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God, by faith.*"* In these words, you see, brethren, two descriptions of righteousness—one, *our own, which is of the law;* our own obedience, whatever it be, to the law of God; our own works and merits under the law; the other, *that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God, by faith;* in other words, precisely the opposite of the former; not our own righteousness, but God's; not by obedience to the law, but through the faith of Christ; not the righteousness of

*Phil. iii. 8, 9.

the sinner, but of the sinner's Saviour, who fulfilled the law, and endured its curse for him. These two descriptions of righteousness are so incompatible with one another that they cannot coalesce. You cannot wear them both together. If you would put on one, you must renounce the other. You cannot be under the law, and under grace; trusting in your own merits and those of Christ at the same time. See, then, what St. Paul meant by being *found in Christ.*

If found having *on his own righteousness*—that is, trusting thereto, wrapping himself therein as a covering from the tempest, when the wrath of God should come against sin, he would not be found in Christ. He was therefore most earnest not thus to be clothed, but rather to be perfectly stripped of all such protection. But, on the other hand, if found trusting only in the righteousness which is provided of God in Christ, and embraced by faith, clothed in that spotless robe which God giveth as a wedding garment to every soul that accepts his invitation to the great feast of redeeming grace, then would he be found in Christ, sheltered as perfectly from the condemnation of sin, as Noah under the shelter of the ark, from the wrath of the flood; as secure of life eternal as he in whose righteousness he is clothed. Thus do we "put on Christ." Thus is he "made unto us righteousness." Thus is he "the Lord our righteousness." In that refuge, clothed upon with that white robe, Paul was abiding when he wrote the words on which we have been commenting. It was all his hope. And there he most earnestly desired to be found when his work should be done. He had suffered the loss of all things for Christ; but in *that* righteous-

ness, he placed no trust. All that, and all else of his own, he renounced, as incapable of answering the demands of the law. Christ had suffered all the penalty, and fulfilled all the obedience of the law for him. *That* was the righteousness in which his hope rejoiced. As his end drew near, he wrapped that robe about him only the more humbly, and confidently, and joyfully. Death found him where every trial of his faith had found him. He fell asleep, where he had lived, "*in Christ Jesus*," and now is he one of that great multitude of the dead, the "absent from the body," over whose graves the Evangelist has written, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. Even so, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors." May we follow him in his faith, that we be like him in his blessedness. And now let us attend to what our text declares of—

II. *The blessedness* of those who die in the Lord.

There is something very remarkable in the very formal and solemn manner in which St. John is made to announce the precious declaration contained in the text. He begins—"*I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth.*" Then another voice is heard, giving a confirming testimony to the declaration of the first: "*Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labors.*" One is led to inquire, Why this peculiar solemnity; this new declaration from heaven; this new-commanded record and this super-added celestial attestation of the same? Was there anything new to the Church, in the days of St. John, in the plain, though precious truth, he was thus commanded to record? Had it not been the consolation of believers, and especially

of martyrs, rejoicing at the stake, ever since the Gospel was preached? Had not St. Paul said, some half century before, that he knew that when his body should be dissolved, he should have "*a building of God, eternal in the heavens;*" that for a child of God to be "*absent from the body*" is to "*be present with the Lord?*"

Let it be remembered that this extraordinary announcement of so plain and familiar a truth, occurs in the midst of the prophecies of St. John concerning the persecutions of the saints, by that mystic Antichrist called by St. Paul "the Man of Sin," "the mystery of iniquity;" known now as the Church of Rome, but called in the verses just preceding our text, *Babylon*, because of its eminent likeness to that ancient city of corruption, in its wars against the Israel of God, and in the abominations of its idolatries. The prophet St. John had just predicted the utter ruin of that apostate church, in these awful words: "*Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornications.*" Next, an angel denounces the vengeance of God upon all who should participate in her crimes. Then, as if to show that, in maintaining a faithful resistance to all her blandishments and persecutions, would be the great trial of the faithfulness of the true people of God, the prophet abruptly declares: "*Here is the patience of the saints: these are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.*" Then, to comfort them in their struggle, comes the declaration: "I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth."

Mark the word *henceforth*. Does it mean from the

time John was directed to write? But why should the dead in Christ be blessed from that period more than any other? There was nothing in the close of John's ministry, (when he received the Revelation,) to make any remarkable epoch in the blessedness of the saints departed. Does it mean, from a certain point of time, in the course of the fulfillment of the prophecies of this book; a time then in the distant future; as if the voice from heaven speaking to John, were issuing from the midst of the events of that future time, and saying, "*from henceforth*," from *that period*, "blessed are the dead," &c.? Such interpretation would teach that it is given only to a certain portion of the dead in Christ to be blessed and to rest from their labors, while it is not given to another; and that the distinction rests only upon *times and external events* in this life, having no connection with the inward state of believers; that it is not because they die in the Lord, that some are blessed and rest from their labors, but because they die at a certain period, amidst certain events. But this is inconsistent with the analogy of faith, and with the plain teaching of St. Paul, when, speaking of the departure of believers in general, he teaches that *to depart in Christ, is to be with Christ*;* and therefore to be blessed with the most glorious rest. It was long before this hearing the voice from heaven, that John had seen in vision "a great multitude which no man could number," standing "before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," and saying, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." They had "come out of great tribulation,

* 2 Cor. v. 9, and Phil. i. 23.

and had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." They were absent from the body and present with the Lord. They had died in the Lord, and were now blessed in his presence, and love, and glory, and they rested from their labors. Their rest is described: "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."* What sweet rest! It is exactly what the voice from heaven said would be the portion of the dead in Christ. And it teaches that as soon as they came out of the great tribulation, as soon as they died, they were thus before the throne; and moreover, that their being thus blessed and glorified, was simply because they had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"—in other words, had *died in the Lord.* From henceforth, from that time of their death, they were so blessed, and entered into that sweet rest. We therefore understand the word "*henceforth*;" ("blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, *from henceforth*,") just as our Church, causing it to be read over the graves of her people, would teach us to understand it, and as the scriptures in other places teach us, concerning the state of the dead in Christ, namely, *from the time of their dying in the Lord;* as if it were written, Blessed, *from the moment of death,* are the dead who die in the Lord.

Viewed in this light, there is abundant explanation of the very peculiar emphasis and solemnity with which a

* Rev. vii. 9–17.

voice from heaven declared anew, and directed John to record anew, what the primitive Church so well understood, and Apostles had so plainly taught, and faithful followers of Christ had so long cherished, and in inspired epistles to the churches was so indelibly written. It was foreseen that a time would come when that truth, so dear to a dying believer, so unspeakably comforting when a Christian is called to suffer for his Master, would be almost erased from the memory and belief of men; when, though it would remain written in the scriptures, a Church, professing to be the exclusive keeper and interpreter of the scriptures, would so keep it out of sight, by keeping the whole scriptures in bondage; would so conceal it by her rubbish of false doctrine, and vain tradition, and so deny it, by positive decree, requiring universal belief in precisely the opposite—thus putting darkness for light—that it would be necessary that so vital a truth of the redemption in Christ Jesus should be recorded again, published anew, established afresh, and with an emphasis and solemnity, as if a new revelation from heaven had been received. The text is not only a foresight of that necessity, but a prophecy, that at that time of darkness and corruption of the truth, there would be, under the Spirit of the Lord, a great revival of that very doctrine of the present blessedness of the dead in Christ, from the very time of their death; a fresh writing of it in the creeds of all Christians; a new record of it in their hearts; and a new attestation thereof by the Spirit of God, accompanying such revived teachings of the truth as it is in Jesus, with his own sanctifying power. All this, you know, was fulfilled.

You know the doctrine of the Church of Rome, con-

cerning the state of the dead in Christ; her abominable invention of purgatorial sufferings to make them meet for the inheritance of the saints. The greatest persecutor of God's people, "drunk with the blood of his saints;" she has forbidden all men, under pain of her anathema, to believe that very hope of being with Christ and resting from his labors at the time of death, which the faithful confessor feels to be his precious consolation when suffering her torments, in his Master's name. *Not henceforth*, she pronounces, against that voice from heaven. They that die in the Lord are not blessed when they die; they do not rest from their labors; they are not present with the Lord. Such is the voice, not from heaven, but from Antichrist. What that "mystery of iniquity" has commanded to be written, and has established by solemn decree, under seal of pretended infallible teaching of the Spirit of God, is, that the dead in Christ, instead of resting from their labors, have entered on labors and pains more severe than ever they knew before; instead of being blessed and happy with Christ, are suffering for their sins, in distant and dark separation from him; instead of finding that his blood "cleanseth from all sin," are experiencing the pains of purgatorial flames, for the finishing of the work that he hath left undone; instead of being relieved by death, are more wretched than before they died; instead of being liberated from all terrestrial things, are now dependent on the prayers, and masses, and indulgences of the Church on earth, on the will of priests, and the charity of sinners, and the payment of money to buy the priest's mediation, for the diminution of their years of suffering. What an abomination of the devil,

the "father of lies!" What a horrible poison to cast into the cup of the children of God, turning all its sweet consolations into bitterness How can that spiritual communion be else than Antichrist, which thus sets itself up in the temple of God, as if it were God, and as if it held the keys of death; which opposes Christ at the death-bed of his saints, prohibits them his consolations, takes away "the garment of praise," with which he invests the dying believer, and substitutes "the spirit of heaviness," yea, denies what the Lord has written for his people, to be read by them in the valley of death, and writes precisely the reverse?

Early began the rudiments of that profaneness. It was part of that "mystery of iniquity," which Paul said had begun to work even in his day.* It went on working and maturing, as the Church declined more and more from the purity of the Gospel, till it became the full grown, regularly decreed, and sealed doctrine of the Church of Rome. No man was allowed to believe otherwise, under pain of her curse. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, that evil doctrine was at its height. It was bringing in enormous gains to the treasury of the Church and to the vices of her priesthood, in the payments of poor, ignorant people for masses and indulgences, which pretended to deliver the suffering souls of Christ's people out of the flames of purgatory. It was the mine of her wealth, the factory of her merchandize, the very lever of her power. The truth of the Gospel concerning the blessedness of the dead in Christ, as well as their free and perfect justification in his righteousness only, had become almost as unknown as if it had never been written. It was in the

* 2 Thess. ii. 7.

Bible yet, but the Bible was locked up and forbidden the people. Then came the Revival—the Reformation. As if a voice from heaven had just been heard, saying: "*Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth,*" *from the hour they die;* as if the confirmation, "*Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors,*" had just sounded from on high; there took place a marvellous, and wide re-establishment of that blessed truth. It was Tetzel's preaching that very doctrine of purgatory, and his making merchandize of men's souls thereby, that first roused the spirit of Luther and caused the first blast of the trump of the Reformation. The scriptures were re-opened—the Gospel was preached anew—the whole truth of the sinner's complete justification in the righteousness of Christ, through faith only, without merit of works, or aid of priests, or saints, or penances, or indulgences, was re-written, re-attested, re-established. With it, was set up anew, in the creeds and hearts of believers, the assurance of the present felicity and rest in Christ, and with Christ, so all that have died in him. It is now written before every eye, by the publication of the scriptures in so many languages, and their being placed in the hands of so many millions. It is written so that it can never be concealed again, wherever the Gospel is preached. Thousands and thousands of faithful ministers of Christ are engaged in obeying the command to write it. It is written by the Spirit of God in the hearts of a multitude that cannot be numbered, and no powers of Antichrist, no wiles of the devil, can ever deface, or take it away. Our mother Church wrote it, not only in her whole testimony to the Gospel doctrine of a free and perfect justification of every

believer in Jesus, by his righteousness only; but particularly in her office for the burial of the dead, testifying therein that "the souls of the faithful, after they depart hence in the Lord, and are delivered from the burden of the flesh," do live with God, and "are in joy and felicity:" so making, as well her graveyards, as her pulpits, proclaim it—so writing it over the chambers of the dead. That testimony is ours also, and in the same words. We renew our solemn protest against one of the vilest inventions of Antichrist, every time we lay a believer in his last bed; proclaiming over his grave, "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors."

Let us pause on these words, and meditate on the happiness of which they speak. They that die in the Lord are blessed *in death itself.* Found in Christ, how changed is death to them! The sting is taken away. The terror is abolished. Where flesh and blood are vanquished and fall, the spirit rises in triumph and sings her song, like Miriam at the Red Sea, "Thanks to God which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." It is their blessedness in death to have him specially near to them; to have most precious communion with him; to feel a freeness and strength of faith in committing their all to him, which they have not known before; to say with a confidence, and love, and peace, sweeter than ever they realized before: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want—I fear no evil—thou art with me." "The Lord is my light and salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord

is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?" They "*sleep* in Jesus." How sweet that description, by the Holy Ghost, of the death of those who die in the Lord! It is going to rest after a weary day. It is all peace, as the sleep of a child folded in a mother's arms. "To die is gain." It is the crossing the river to the blessed land, and the river is divided that the believer may go over unharmed, untroubled.

The dead in Christ are blessed in being "*with Christ*," "*present with the Lord.*" Their "intermediate state" is not intermediate between darkness and perfect light; between suffering, and unmingled, ineffable, felicity; between being away from Christ, and being in the full presence and communion of his love and glory. It is intermediate because between death and the resurrection; between being absent from the body, and being in the body again, when it shall be raised in incorruption; between the full measure of felicity which the soul is capable of in separation from the body, and that larger measure, when its original habitation being fashioned like unto the glorious body of the Lord Jesus, shall be restored to it, and both in one person shall be "present with the Lord." Thus intermediate their state, their presence with him in glory is without a veil. Their communion with him in bliss and love has no barrier to hinder, no infirmity to weaken, no cloud to obscure it. They were found in Christ at death, and they must be with him forever in glory. Our blessed Lord's own chosen consolation to his people here is, "I will receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

They rest from their labors. They were "*strangers and pilgrims*" here, far off from home. They had a wilder-

ness to labor through; a stubborn, rebellious nature to labor with; many a grievous burden to bear; a host of infirmities to make them wearied and faint in their minds; a great work to do, demanding all diligence. Their patience was often sorely tried. Their hearts were often very heavy. Their hands hung down. They longed for rest. Now it has come. The pilgrim has reached his city of habitation. The stranger has arrived at his home. The burden is dropped. The work is done. *They rest from their labors.*

They were *soldiers.* A great prize was to be gained; a great battle was to be fought. Their all, for eternity, was at stake. The world was to be overcome. An adversary of great might, the god of this world, was to be vanquished. Their march was at every step through the country of the enemy. The conflict was never over while they lived in the flesh. Incessantly to stand on the watch, was their calling. They "fought a good fight and kept the faith." In the armor of God they trusted, and with the sword of the Spirit contended. In their weakness, they were made strong. As their day, so was their strength. God was their refuge, a very present help in time of trouble. Thus they endured to the end; sometimes cast down, never destroyed. Now are they more than conquerors through him that loved them. The conflict is ended, the land is gained, the crown is won. The promise of the Lord is fulfilled: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me on my throne." "*They rest from their labors.*"

Sweet indeed must be that rest to a soul just arrived out of this evil world; just delivered from the burden of the flesh, and all the pains, and sorrows, and sins, of this

mortal life—sweet that Sabbath of perfect rest, after all these working days of the week in which we are so wearied and heavy laden; sweet that Sabbath in the temple of the glory of God, in the immediate presence of Jesus, where there can be no more death, nor sorrow—all tears wiped away and never to return, the joy of the Lord our portion and inheritance.

Yea, sweet indeed, when it is considered with whom, in what fellowship, that eternal rest is to be enjoyed. How little we know here, by any just conception, of the love of God towards his children whom he hath adopted in Christ, and in whose hearts he hath shed abroad the spirit of the adoption, so that they are "not servants but sons—heirs of God through Christ!" We measure God's love to his children so much by their love to him. And we measure the fellowship and love of the saints above so much by the feebleness and dullness of our love in the Church below. The communion of saints! what do we know of it now? Christian society! social pleasures of holy minds and hearts, united in Christ and in a common inheritance, baptized in one Spirit; how little we know of it? Church relationship! what conception can we get of it in its fullness and blessedness, from any specimen furnished in the bonds of brotherhood realized among believers in the exceedingly infirm, and mutilated, and defiled condition of the Church on earth, with its mixtures, and divisions, and jealousies and strife? But oh, when that sweet rest shall come; when the soul departed finds itself in that communion of "the spirits of just men made perfect," where is perfect calm from all that agitates this visible Church on earth, where eye will see to eye, and heart will come to

heart, and sin cannot enter, and love is made perfect, and the love of God to his people is not only received, but known, and realized, in all its wonderful depths—when we are come to the New Jerusalem, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, to God in his glory, and Jesus as he is; then shall we understand what holy society is; *Church brotherhood;* the nearness of the relationship between the children of God's adoption in Christ; their nearness in love to God, through their vital union to his beloved Son. Then shall we understand what communion of saints is—with God, in Christ; with one another, in the life everlasting. It is a rest which *remaineth* to the people of God. Only a foretaste have we here, and that in comparatively a very slight degree; as a mariner catches a little sense of rest, now and then, upon his ocean voyage. To form any conception of its ineffable sweetness, *remaineth.* Oh, how unsearchable the grace that has prepared such blessedness for such sinners, and that prepares such sinful hearts for such blessedness!

But methinks I hear some complaint, as if I were omitting to speak of one very important part of our text: "*their works do follow them.*" No, it is not forgotten. It is reserved as part of the exhibition of the blessedness of the dead in Christ. But the *works* of believers! Those imperfect, unworthy works, which they tried to do for Christ and his Church, but which they always felt to come so far short in every duty of motive and spirit, of love, and faith, and devotedness; the works they so often repented of as most defective, and all of which they so utterly renounced when they sought the rock on which to build their hope of justification and acceptance with God;

—how can they follow into that blessedness; what can they do in that rest; what office have they to perform in the presence of Christ; why will they go with believers, dying in the Lord? Mark! they *follow*—they go not before to open the door. No, no! "Not of works, lest any man should boast." Jesus goes before. The believer's faith goes before, following Jesus. The door is opened by the one Mediator, who hath "for us entered," and who by entering as our Forerunner, and Surety, and Advocate, and Righteousness, hath opened wide the way for his people. And because his people enter by him, their works of faith, and labors of love, wrought by his grace, and accepted through his intercession, enter likewise. They bring no plea. They present no claim. They too, must be accepted, only through grace, "*not of works.*" The righteousness of Christ that justifies the believer, justifies his works as a believer's. They follow him, not afar off, but immediately, as works always and necessarily follow faith; inseparably united, going wherever it goes, its evidences, its fruits, its fullness; the clustering grapes following hard upon the life and growth of the vine; the manifestation following faithfully upon the reality of godliness. There is to be a reward "according to works done in the body"—a reward not *of* eternal life, for that is the purchase of Christ and his free gift to the believer—but a reward *in* eternal life, after it has been freely given, after the ransomed of the Lord have freely entered into the joy of their Lord. Then will come their reward, *according* to their works—not *on account* of their *works*, on account still of the merits and grace of Christ alone; but *according* to the faithfulness wherewith the believer, in his heart's

works and in his life's works, has adorned his Master's service and done good to man. That reward will bring sweet contributions to the blessedness of the departed believer. It will mingle precious joys with his everlasting rest. Often he will wonder at the abundant grace bestowed by his gracious Saviour on what he regarded perhaps as the very least of his doings—the cup of cold water given; the secret sigh to do what, through opposing providences, was never done; the box of ointment, broken and poured out, with such a sense of sinfulness and so many tears, that it was never remembered, but for its unworthiness. But the thoughts of our Lord will not be as our thoughts. Works will greatly help, through grace, the blessedness which, but for grace, they could never enter, and would only come into condemnation.

And, now, my dear brethren, let us write in our hearts, let us pray the blessed Spirit of God so to write in our hearts what the voice from heaven directed John to write concerning the blessedness of the dead in Christ, that we who live, and are so soon to die, may be quickened into all diligence so to live, that when we die we may share that rest.

How comforting and delightful the assurance we have been considering, concerning those dear departed relatives and friends, who, we have reason to believe, did die in the Lord. Let us bless God for so plain and positive a declaration of their state. Let us enjoy it. Let us not permit the mistiness with which some seem to labor to invest the condition of the righteous dead, to come over our vision. Mysterious as their state, out of the body, unquestionably is, it does not follow that what is revealed

concerning it is not plain and certain. True, we know not what we shall be there; it is a condition of being of which we have no analogous experience. But "*this we know*," because God has revealed it, that to depart hence in the Lord, is to be with the Lord; and *that* is enough to know, and enough to give us the sweetest thoughts of the present glorious communion and felicity of all those whom death found in Christ.

But are we to be like them, in our death? We are soon to follow them in the dissolving of our earthly house of this tabernacle. Have we a good hope that we shall follow them in their departure in the Lord? How will it be with us? How is it *now?* Can I say, "For me to live is Christ?" Am I now in him, as my only hope, my daily life, a branch that brings forth fruit? It is surely very impressive, and ought exceedingly to reprove and animate us to greater diligence, to see St. Paul with all his evidences of being in Christ, and all his assurance of a crown of glory, still pressing on, that he might "win Christ and be found in him." Brethren, may we meet no sad disappointment in our hope, when it shall be too late to obtain a better. May we now make it sure that we abide in Christ and he in us, so that when we come to the last trial, we may have such sweet evidence of God's love to us, and such precious assurance that we are going to him, that it may seem as if on the wall of our chamber, for our closing eyes to read, it were written by the finger of God: *Blessed are ye that die in the Lord;* and as if a voice from heaven sweetly whispered, *Yea, for ye rest from your labors!*

SERMON XIX.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

LUKE xxiv. 34.

"The Lord is risen indeed."

THESE are words of conviction, and of joy. To appreciate them, as uttered by the disciples of Christ, when they became assured that he had risen from the dead, we must enter into their circumstances. Well persuaded that, in Jesus, they beheld him to whom all the prophets had witnessed, who was to sit on the throne of David, and to establish his kingdom over all people; they had forsaken all to follow him, and had embarked all their hopes on his claims. Already had they learned, by painful experience, that it was through much tribulation they were to share in his kingdom; but such trials had not shaken their faith. Accustomed to behold him despised, persecuted, and rejected of men, their confidence was continually sustained, as they heard him speak "as never man spake," and with an authority that controlled the sea and raised the dead. But now, deep tribulation, such as they had not known before, had overtaken them. What darkness ad come upon their faith! He, who was once so mighty

to give deliverance to the captive, had himself been taken captive, and bound to the cross. He, who with a word raised the dead, had been violently, wickedly, put to an ignominious death. He, whom they expected to reign as king of kings, and to subdue all nations, had been brought under the dominion of his own nation, and shut up in the sepulchre, and all the people of Israel were now boastfully confident that the death of the cross had proved him a deceiver. Oh, indeed, it was a season of great heaviness, and dismay, and trial; those days and nights in which their beloved Master was lying in death! The great stone which his enemies had rolled to the door of the sepulchre, lest his disciples should go by night and take away the body, was expressive of the cold, dead, weight, which that death and burial had laid upon their hearts. That sepulchre seemed as the tomb of all their hopes. All was buried with Jesus. "For, as yet, (it is written,) they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead."* Had they understood what he had often told them, they would have known "that thus it behooved (the) Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day."

The third day was now come. The Jewish Sabbath was over. The first day of the week was breaking. While it is yet dark, faithful women repair to the sepulchre with spices for the embalming. They find the stone rolled away. Wondering at this, they enter the tomb. The body is not there. Enemies have taken it away, is their first thought. Mary Magdalene hastens to say to Peter and John, "they have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him."

* John, xx. 9.

Angels appear to the women in their alarm, saying, "He is not here, but is risen." "With fear," and yet "with great joy," they ran "to bring his disciples word." But to the latter, "their words seemed as idle tales, and they believed them not." Peter and John had now reached "the place where the Lord lay," and entering in, they found the grave-clothes remaining, but otherwise an empty sepulchre. They "saw and believed." After a little, came Mary Magdalene to the other disciples, and "told them she had seen the Lord," and what things he had spoken unto her. Still, "they believed not." It seemed too good to be true. How was it that they did not remember his words, which even the Chief Priests and Pharisees repeated to Pilate, as a reason for posting a guard around the tomb, "After three days, I will rise again."* The terrible shock of the crucifixion must have so stunned their faith, and distracted their thoughts, that what they afterward remembered so clearly, was either forgotten, or not comprehended.

That same day, two of them went toward the neighboring village. Their hearts were heavy, and they "talked of all these things that had happened." Jesus "drew near, and went with them." He often draws near to those whose hearts are sad, because they feel their need of him. He asked their grief. They told him of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they believed to have been "a prophet, mighty in word and deed;" how he had been put to death—he of whom they expected that "he would have redeemed Israel;" and how it was now the third day since this was done; and of the amazing statement

* Matt. xxvii. 63.

that his sepulchre had been found empty, and that a vision of angels had been seen, "who said he was alive."

Then answered their unknown companion: "O slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." What an exposition must that have been! Who but must wish we had it to read! No wonder their hearts were inflamed at the touch of such words, and burned within them, while thus the Light of the world was opening to them the scriptures. Presently, while sitting at meat with them, Jesus "*took bread, and brake it, and gave to them.*" It was a sign they could not mistake. Their eyes were opened in that breaking of bread. "They knew him, and he vanished out of their sight." Immediately they returned to Jerusalem with the tidings. They found the rest of the disciples, and others, gathered together—but in what mind? No more in doubt, but saying among themselves, "*The Lord is risen indeed.*" The two from Emmaus, now added their testimony. Again, and more confidently and joyfully, must they all have said one to another, with a relief of heart, and a return of faith, and a resurrection of hope, like the return of day after a long and fearful night, *The Lord is risen indeed; the Lord is risen indeed.*

Corresponding with the faith and joy of those disciples, is the state of mind in which the Church should keep her feast, this day—the annual commemoration of the resurrection of her Lord and Head.* Eminently is it the Lord's day—that from which all the Sabbaths of the Chris-

* Easter Sunday.

tian year derive their light and festival. It is "the great day of the feast"—that feast of faith and hope which measures all the life of the true believer.

We began by saying that the words of the text, as uttered by the Apostles, are words of *conviction* and words of *joyfulness*. Under those two aspects we will treat the subject they contain.

I. *Words of conviction.* "The Lord is risen indeed." The Apostles had laid aside their doubts and were assured. And what if *we* were not assured that Christ did rise? St. Paul answers, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." "Ye are yet in your sins. Then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."* In other words, the great seal and evidence of the victory of Christ over sin and death, as our surety, would be wanting. We could have no confidence in the efficacy of his death as a sacrifice for us. Life and immortality would be still in darkness. Our hope would want its corner-stone, our faith its warrant. Every promise of the Gospel would lack the signature of him who only can fulfil it.† But, saith the same Apostle, "Now *is* Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept."‡ His resurrection was not only the greatest and the most important of his miraacles, but the most abundantly and variously attested. We have only space here for a mere glance at its evidenco.

Prophets had for many centuries foretold that Messiah would rise from the dead.§ Jesus had several times predicted and promised it, both to his disciples and the Jews,

* 1 Cor. xv. 14, 17, 18. † Rom. i. 4. Acts xvii. 31; & xiii. 32, 33.
‡ 1 Cor. xv. 20. § Ps. xvi. 9, 10—cxxxii. 11. Is. liii. 10, 11, 12. Acts ii. 30, 31.

who believed not on him.* So well did the Chief Priests and Pharisees remember his words and the exact time that he said he would lie in the grave, that it was the alleged ground of their application to Pilate for a guard of soldiers to protect the sepulchre from any attempt of his disciples, apparently to make good the prediction, by stealing away his body. But while the enemies remembered so well his saying, his disciples, as if it were so ordered to increase the evidence, had no recollection, or no idea of the meaning, of his words, and therefore no preparation either to expect his resurrection, or to practice the fraud which the Chief Priests apprehended. But now that the tomb is empty on the predicted third day, notwithstanding the guard of Roman soldiers, determined as they valued their lives to keep it safely; that notorious fact must be accounted for. The grave-clothes are there. The fact of the burial was certain and notorious. Either *friends* or *enemies* must have removed the body; or else it did rise from death. Enemies of course did not. Their easy and triumphant answer to the preaching of the resurrection, had they done it, would have been to produce the body. Did friends? Who were the friends of Jesus? Eleven Apostles, Joseph of Arimathea, and a few women! The first were so overpowered by fear that when he was taken, "all forsook him and fled."† But had they not been too fearful to attempt it, in the face of the Roman guard, was it possible for them to accomplish it, to roll away that great stone, and bear away that burden, so jealously and so strongly watched? Were the soldiers awake, or asleep? Of course, the latter, if that

* Matt. xx. 18, 19. † Matt. xxvi. 56.

robbery was committed. But what less than miracle put to sleep a whole Roman guard, on such a night, with such a trust, and under such responsibility, and kept them all so fast asleep that all the movement of all the men necessary to roll away the stone, and force the tomb, and bear away the body, did not arouse them? Seeing then that friends *could* not, and enemies *would* not, remove the body, the empty sepulchre was negative evidence of resurrection. Then, when afterwards Jesus was frequently seen and conversed with; when his doubting disciples were allowed to touch him, to place their hands in the print of the wounds in his hands and side; when during a space of forty days they listened to his instructions, recognizing perfectly the well-known countenance and voice, and the teaching as never man taught; when he appeared to "more than five hundred brethren at once,"* so that, as a mere historical fact, we must deny the evidence of all history, if we question the evidence of his appearance in the body, after his crucifixion; what excuse can be devised for not believing that he was risen indeed? Will any resort to the desparate pretext that the disciples were deceived? But, as men of ordinary sense, must they not have known, during a close conversation and association of forty days, whether it was really a human body and the body of Jesus which they beheld, or not? Will you imagine a miracle of blindness, to get rid of a miracle of resurrection? Will you take another expedient, and say they were not deceived, but they practiced a deception? Then you must give a motive to account for such a de-

* 1 Cor. xv. 6.

ception? You must explain how men, so evidently good men, and the teachers of so much goodness, and the influence of whose teaching was, and is, to make all deception abhorred and despised; how such men could have gone out into a world in arms against them and their doctrine, and preached everywhere the resurrection of Christ as the great seal of the gospel and corner-stone of their message; knowing that they would draw upon them the utmost rage and persecution that man could shew; unshaken by any dangers, unwearied by any sufferings; cheerfully losing their all, and submitting to tortures and death, that they might preach Jesus and the resurrection. If Christ was not raised, if their teaching was all untrue, then "were they of all men most miserable," having nothing but sufferings here, and expecting to answer for a life-long fraud hereafter. Will you imagine a miracle of folly that you may escape the miracle of resurrection?

But there was an evidence if possible, more convincing even than the appearance of Jesus to his disciples, and his frequent association with them. It was in "the events of the day of Pentecost."

Here we remark, in general, that his resurrection was the great sign and crowning miracle to which our Lord, all the way of his ministry, to the day of his crucifixion, referred both friends and opposers, for the final confirmation of all his claims and doctrines. He staked all on the promise that he would rise from death. The Jews asked of him a sign that they might believe. He answered, "There shall no sign be given, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be

three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* Again, in answer to the question of the Jews, "What sign shewest thou?" he promised the same sign, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." "He spake (says the evangelist,) of the temple of his body."† Thus, on that single event, the resurrection of Christ, the whole of Christianity, as it all centers in, and depends on him, was made to hinge. Redemption waited the evidence of resurrection. Nothing was to be accounted as sealed and finally certified till Jesus should deliver himself from the power of death. All of the gospel, all the hopes it brings to us, all the promises with which it comforts us, were taken for their final verdict, as true or false, sufficient or worthless, to the door of that jealously guarded and stone-sealed sepulchre, waiting the settlement of the question, *will he rise?*

It was a wondrous sign to choose. The mere selection of such a sign by Christ himself, was itself a very strong evidence of what its accomplishment was to prove. We do not wonder that the enmity of the Jews was all centered upon the watching of that gate. It was a serious night indeed, to friends and foes, and well appreciated among the powers of darkness, when that great sign was to be seen, or else the gospel finally contradicted. But an event so momentous was not left to but one class of evidences. There was a way by which thousands at once were made to receive as powerful assurance that Christ was risen, as if they had seen him in his risen body. Jesus, before his death, had made a great promise to his disciples, to be fulfilled by him, only after his death and

* Matt. xii. 38—40. † John ii. 19.

resurrection; a promise impossible to be fulfilled if his resurrection failed; because then, not only would he be under the power of death, but all his claim to divine power would be brought to nought. It was the promise of the Holy Ghost. "When the Comforter is come *whom I will send unto you* from the Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, *he shall testify of me*," "*he shall glorify me.*"*

It was after he had "shown himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of his disciples forty days, and speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," that the day for the accomplishment of that promise came. The day was that which commemorated the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. It was now to witness the going forth of the Gospel from Jerusalem. I need not relate to you the wonderful events of that day of Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Ghost with the "sound as of a rushing mighty wind," that "filled all the house;" the "cloven tongues like as of fire," which sat on each of the disciples; the evidence that it was the Spirit of God which had then come, given in the sudden and astonishing change which immediately came over the Apostles, transforming them from weak and timid men to the boldest and strongest; in the change which suddenly came upon the power of their ministry, converting it from the weak agent it had previously been, in contact with all the unbelief and wickedness of men, into an instrument so mighty, that out of a congregation composed of Jews of all nations, many of whom had probably partaken in the crucifixion of Christ, *three thousand, that day*, were bowed down to repentance and subdued to his obedi-

* John xv. 26 & xvi. 14.

ence. I need not remind you of the miraculous attestation that all this was from God, in the sudden gift, to the Apostles, of divers tongues, whereby they preached to an audience from all nations, in the several languages in which they were born; nor need I tell you of the immense number of people that witnessed all these things. Thus the power of God testified of Jesus. Thus Jesus made good his word, "*I will send the Holy Ghost and he shall testify of me.*" How could he thus employ the power of God, if the great sign, appointed—his resurrection, had failed? How could he thus shew himself mighty to raise thousands from the death of sin and to make his Apostles, in a moment, preachers in all languages, if the power of death were still upon him? How could he send the Holy Ghost and shew such mighty signs, who was still bound in the sepulchre?

Thus was the day of Pentecost a great day of testimony to the life and divine power, and consequently the resurrection, of Christ. Each of those who heard the divers tongues of the ministry of that day, each of the three thousand, was a witness to the same. All "the signs and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost," by which God bore witness to the preaching of the Apostles, as in all their ministry they made the resurrection of Christ the great demonstration of their message, all testified to its reality. For, would God accompany with such powers the constant declaration of a lie? But witnesses have been multiplying by thousands ever since. Every man that receives the Holy Ghost to raise him from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, is a witness. He can testify that Christ now liveth, and is

exalted to the right hand of power, and is able to make good all his word, because he hath given him his Spirit. He hath given him a new heart; he hath done that for him which only a power above man could do, and which no faith but a Christian faith ever obtained. And his question is, can he be dead, lying under the dominion of the grave; can he have been rejected of God, who hath the living power to do these things? Thus will the evidence of our Lord's resurrection, be increasing with every new spiritual resurrection among the children of this world, until that day when he shall "come in the glory of his Father and all his angels with him," and when "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him." Then will "the *power* of his resurrection" be known in the universal rising of the dead at his word.

We said, the words of the text, in the mouths of the Apostles, were words of *conviction* and of *joyfulness*. Under the latter head we proceed next to consider the subject contained in them.

II. *Words of joyfulness.* "*The Lord is risen indeed.*" The resurrection of Christ was the resurrection of the faith and hopes of his disciples to a new life and vigor. It made them new creatures, as to all joy and peace in believing. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."* "The Lord is risen indeed," was an exclamation of joy equivalent to, His kingdom shall embrace all nations; our faith shall

*1 Pet. i. 3—4.

overcome the world; death is conquered; eternal life is the heritage of all believers.

1st. Let us consider the resurrection of Christ in its connection with *his death as an atoning sacrifice* for sin. Suppose that after we have commemorated his crucifixion, in the solemn services of our "Good Friday," we had no resurrection to commemorate, in the customary praises of our Easter Sunday, what consolation would there be to us in the former? You know that Jesus became "obedient unto the death of the cross" as our *surety*. "He was made sin for us." "The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all." Our sins being thus imputed to him as our Representative, he was treated, in his death, by him to whom atonement was offered, as if our guilt were his own. He was held under the arrest of the law of God. Its penalty was required of him. Every jot and tittle was he to pay, and not till all was discharged could he be justified from the imputed sin, and delivered from its bonds. He did satisfy the law to the uttermost, and was justified in behalf of all those in whose place he stood, and for whom he died. But how is that ascertained? Where is the evidence? By what hath God declared it? The only conclusive evidence of justification from the imputation of sin, is the release of him to whose account it is laid. Then if my surety were still under the bonds of death, and lying in its prison, must I not suppose that the arrest of the law which he came to satisfy, is still holding him; that the price of my redemption has not been all paid, or has not been accepted; and therefore that my hope is vain, and I am yet under condemnation? But Christ *is risen indeed*. The law has delivered its prisoner.

The surety comes forth from the grave. "Death hath no more dominion over him." He is "*justified in the Spirit*," by the power of his own Spirit raising him from the dead. Thus was his justification from the imputed sins of men, *declared* by the Spirit, that he might be "believed on in the world."* In his resurrection, "God hath given assurance unto all men," that the atonement was finished and accepted, the surety discharged, the hand writing against us nailed to his cross, the way of a free and full remission of sins laid open; that Jesus is "able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him," and that in him, whosoever believeth shall be justified perfectly, and have peace with God. Thus you perceive the close connection between his being "*delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification.*"

2nd. Let us consider the resurrection of our Lord in connection with *his making intercession for us.*

You must not suppose that the whole work of Christ, as the offerer of a propitiation, was finished on the cross. The death of the sacrifice was there finished. All of the office of our atoning Priest and victim that pertained to the altar of sacrifice, in the court of the sanctuary, was there completed. But there was a work remaining to be done within the vail, in the most holy place of the sanctuary on high, in the presence of God the Father—a work of oblation and intercession, in the presentation of the sacrifice.

Those two chief parts of the Saviour's priesthood, were showed in the typical office of the levitical High Priest on "the great day of atonement." In the solemn services of that annual expiation, there were two main acts:

*1 Tim. iii. 16.

the slaying of the victim, and the presentation, or oblation, of the sacrifice. The former was done only at the altar of burnt offerings in the court of the temple; the latter only within the inner vail, when the High Priest entered the most holy place, with the blood, and sprinkled it before the mercy seat. The second was as essential as the first. It was only when the oblation in the most holy place, had been added to the sacrificing in the court of the sanctuary, that the propitiation became effectual.

This type could be fulfilled in our Lord, only when he who was the Lamb that was slain, should rise from death as our ever-living Priest, and ascend *in the body* that was slain, to "the tabernacle in the heavens," there to present himself as the Lamb of God, before God, and make intercession for us, in virtue of his having been sacrificed for us. Resurrection was thus essential. How could St. Paul have put forth that triumphant challenge, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" if he could not have said, as the strength of his confidence, "It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is *risen again*, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?"* Here is first the initiatory work of our justification, *Christ hath died;* then the finishing work on his part, his *intercession for us* at God's right hand; and between them is the connecting fact, he is *risen again.* The cross being thus connected with the throne—the death with the intercession, by means of resurrection—we have the one perfect and sufficient oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.

Thus all the precious mercies that flow down upon a guilty

* Rom. viii. 33, 34.

world, through Christ—all that justifies the believer—all that sanctifies the sinner—all the grace by which our weakness is made strong and our darkness is made "light in the Lord," every present consolation in Christ, and all that we hope to find in him during the trial of death, amidst the solemnities of the judgment day, and in the everlasting blessedness of the kingdom of God—as all depend on the completion of his office in his everlasting Priesthood in heaven, so all combine to teach us the joyfulness of the assurance that "*the Lord is risen indeed.*"

3d. Let us next consider the resurrection of Christ, as it is connected with, and insures, *the promised triumphs of his Church.*

The Church is the mystical body of Christ, inhabited and made alive unto God, by his Holy Spirit, as his natural body was inhabited by his human soul. Of the latter, the promise was, that "*His soul should not be left in hell, neither should his flesh see corruption.*"* Concerning the former, the promise is, "*The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*"† In both promises, the word *hell*, stands, as in the Apostles' Creed, for Hades—*the region and dominion of death.* In the first promise, the meaning was, that the powers of death should not be permitted to keep the natural body of our Lord in their dominions. In the second, the meaning was, that all the powers of darkness, sitting in the gates of the dominion of death, and pouring forth from thence their forces against his mystical body, the Church, should not finally prevail against it.

How the powers of hell endeavored, not only to subdue the Captain of our salvation, but after he was shut up

* Acts ii. 31. † Matt. xvi. 18.

within the gates of death, to hold him there, and when he arose from the dead, to persuade men that he was still there, I need not tell you. How impossible it was that he should be holden of them, when the set time to come forth had arrived; how the guard was made to swoon away, and there was a great earthquake, and an angel rolled the stone from the mouth of his tomb, and Jesus came forth, bearing "the keys of death and of hell," the mighty conqueror, to reign forever and ever, I need not tell you. But in that triumph, we read how easily and how certainly he will see that the gates of hell shall not prevail against his Church. It is the pledge and earnest that all his glorious promises concerning her shall be fulfilled.

Very precious and glorious are those promises. The Church is to embrace all nations. The stone "cut out of the mountain, without hands," is to become a great mountain and fill the whole earth.* "The kingdom and dominion and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."† The long dispersed of Israel and Judah are to be summoned from out of all nations, gathered to their own land, converted to Christ.‡ Then shall "the fullness of the Gentiles come in" and be "as life from the dead."§

But man demands a sign from heaven to convince him that such things are possible. "What sign showest thou, seeing thou wilt do all these things?" The answer is, the

* Dan. ii. 34, 35—45. † Dan. vii. 27. ‡ Ezek. xxxvi. 24—29, and xxxvii. 15—26. §Rom. xi. 25—15.

sign has already been given. "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold, I am alive forever more, Amen, and have the keys of of hell and death."* Jesus, risen from the dead, is the sign unto the end of the world, to assure the Church and the world that not a jot or tittle of what he hath promised, by the scriptures, shall fail. "I am the resurrection and the life," saith the Lord. "Fear not, therefore, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Because I live, ye shall live also." Great tribulations and persecutions, and falling away from the truth, may yet befall the Church, as in times past. It may seem, once more, as if she had gone almost to the grave. Priests of Antichrist, in league with the gates of hell, may conspire to keep her in prison and in darkness, fast bound in chains, such as they well know how to forge. But they shall not prevail. The captive shall be delivered. "The Lord shall be her light," and "the days of her mourning shall be ended." Such, in point of tribulation, has been her history more than once already. Think of the fearful corruption and darkness, and bondage, and persecution, and spiritual death, with which the Papal dominion, the power of "the Man of Sin," who, "as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God,"† did once, and for a long time, oppress the Church of Christ, and drove the few faithful witnesses of the truth, that remained, into the wilderness, into prisons and dens, and caves of the earth, so that it seemed as if there was hardly faith left on the earth. But though Amalek was thus long victorious, there were a faithful few, a little scattered flock, a remnant, as

* Rev. i. 18. † 2 Thess. ii. 3, 4.

in the days of Elijah the prophet, who held up their hands to God in prayer, and ceased not, till God raised up his faithful witness, Martin Luther, and gave him the trumpet of the sanctuary to sound an alarm and proclaim anew his truth. The wonderful awakening of the Church, as from the dead, in that day; that manifestation of the power of her risen Head, to be unto her "the resurrection and the life," is a standing and glorious testimony to all ages, and for all future trials, how little her faithful people have to fear, and how certain are the promises of a final possession, by her Lord, of the whole kingdom of this world, in his time. Her grave clothes shall be laid aside—her sackcloth will be cast away. "As a bride adorned with her jewels," will she come forth, leaning on the hand of her Lord. "Voices in heaven" shall be heard, "saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."

Now, it deserves your attention, that when the scriptures speak of great conversions of nations and millions to the Gospel, as connected with the second advent of our Lord, and which are to bring in his millennial reign, the change is represented as one of impossibility to human strength, of hopelessness to human wisdom and foresight, of magnitude and wonder and miracle, equal to that of a resurrection of the dead. Read the 37th chapter of Ezekiel. It is an account of the restoration of the Jews, of the lost ten tribes, as well as of Judah and Benjamin, to their own land; their being united together again as one nation; their being cleansed from their sins and converted to Christ, so as to have the Son of David for

their acknowledged King and Shepherd forever, and his sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore; and all these wonderful changes are described under the figure of the resurrection of a whole nation from the dead. The Prophet was "carried out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set down in the midst of a valley which was full of bones," and was made to pass round them to observe their state. "There were very many in the open valley, and lo, they were very dry." Then the question was asked him, "*Can these bones live?*" In other words, what can be more hopeless to all human view, than the condition of these bones? How is it possible they can be gathered from this wide and promiscuous dispersion, so long exposed and bleached, and mingled together in this open valley, carried by beasts of prey hither and thither; how can they be made to resume their former places, each in its own body, bone to its bone, and stand up alive? The Prophet's faith could answer no further than by referring the question to the power of God: "O Lord God, thou knowest." Then came the command, "Prophesy upon these bones, say unto them, Hear the word of the Lord." How could the dead hear? But the Prophet obeyed. "And there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and bones came to bones, *bone to his bone.*" Each resumed its original place in its own body, "and the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them above." But as yet there was no life in them. The Prophet, as commanded, prophesied again, and "the breath came into them, and they lived and stood up an exceeding great army." Then came the interpretation of the Lord: "These bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, Our bones

are dried and our hope is lost. Behold, O my people, I will open your graves and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel, and put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live and know that I am the Lord."

Now, what says the unbelief of the world, as it looks over the present condition of the Jews, so widely dispersed, so mixed up among themselves, so mixed up among all nations, the ten tribes so lost that none know where they are; all so hardened against the Gospel? "Surely their bones are dried and their hope is lost." We ask the faith of man, Can these dry bones live? Can the promises of the scriptures, concerning these people, be fulfilled? We do not wonder that many ridicule the idea; that others are unable to entertain it, seeing how few are content with the answer of the Prophet, "Lord thou knowest." The difficulties are as insuperable to human might as the raising of the dead. So was it intended that we should regard them. We have no desire to lessen the appearance of impossibility, except to him who is "the Resurrection and the Life."

But carry the use of the Prophet's vision beyond the people of Israel. The state of the population of the whole unconverted world, may be seen in that valley of bones. Converted unto God, it is all to be. The heathen are already given to the Lord, our Saviour, "for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession;" and a day is fast coming when the possession and inheritance shall be, not only given, but received and entered on. But what immeasurable difficulties oppose such a conversion and regeneration; such impossibilities!

What! shall the little flock of the true people of God, possess such a kingdom; shall this little stone ever fill the whole earth; can all these nations, so long dead and buried under vices, and superstitions, and idolatries, and all darkness, and perversions of mind, for so many centusies,—can they be made all to turn unto Christ, and live as his people? Make the hopelessness of such an event, to human power, as great as you please. The reality cannot be exaggerated. Hopeless, it is indeed, if the power of the Church, without the power of its Lord, or without a far mightier putting forth of his power, than the Church has known since her first days, is to be our whole trust. But our assured answer to all difficulties is *the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.* His *word* assures us that such great things are *promised.* His *resurrection* assures us that, because promised, they can and will be *accomplished.* What is there in all of them more hopeless, more impossible, than seemed the resurrection of Christ, during those days in which he lay in the grave? To the heathen, nothing was more impossible than that the dead should be raised. Pliny said that to bring them back to life (*Revocare defunctos*) was one of those things which even God could not do. Festus thought Paul mad, and the Athenians mocked at him, because he preached the resurrection. And are there any bonds holding the Jews in unbelief, stronger than those which held our Lord's body in death? Are there any barriers between the resuscitation of the Jews, as a nation, and their being restored to their own land, more impossible than those between our dead, and buried, Lord, and the kingdom on high, to which he ascended? Have the powers of dark-

ness acquired a more hopeless dominion over the heathen world, than they seemed to have obtained over the rejected, and crucified, and lifeless Head of all the promises of the Gospel? Is there any thing to discourage the Christian from expecting that the Jews, and the heathen, will ever live unto God as a Christian people and Church; is their any thing to make the unbeliever mock at such an expectation, which had not its perfect equal when Jesus lay in the sepulchre; his disciples scattered and dismayed; his enemies scoffing, and triumphing? But "*the Lord is risen indeed.*" Those impossibilities were all brought to nought. He rose, the "Lord of all power and might." Death could not hold him from ascending to his Father. The nations could not prevent him from fulfilling his word. All that he hath said shall be done. The greatest is done already. Did he raise himself from death? Then he can, and will, bring Jews and Gentiles to spiritual life, because he has promised. "*God hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*"

5th. Lastly, we must consider the Resurrection of Christ, in its connection *with that of his people*, who sleep in him. There must be "*the redemption of the body*," because *Man* is already redeemed. Our Lord will not leave his work unfinished. "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost," and he will not leave it in ruin and desolation, polluted and outcast. He will build it again, and in far more than its original beauty. It partook of the sin, and the condemnation, and penalty. In the case of all believers, it must partake of the justification and the glory. What God joined together in the fall, he will join together in the restoration. "We shall all be changed;

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump." "This corruptible must put on incorruptible, and this mortal, immortality." The sign, the pledge, the assurance, of all is that *the Lord is risen.* Believers are members of a mystical body, of which he is head. Because he lives, they shall live also. He can no more permit the gates of Hell to prevail over them, to keep them in death, than he would allow them to prevail over him. When he rose, as when he died and was buried, it was in his federal relation, as the surety and representative of his people. In him the believer rose also. Our graves were opened, when the stone was rolled from his sepulchre. Our victory over death was secured, when he burst its bonds and came forth free. Beautifully is the argument from his resurrection, to ours, delivered in St. Paul's allusion to the presentation of the sheaf of the first ripe wheat, in the temple, "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept."* The Jews were prohibited the gathering of the harvest, until the first fruits were offered to God as an acknowledgment of his goodness in the products of the ground. Till then, the harvest was regarded as unholy—unconsecrated. The great proprietor had not received his tribute. That done, all was considered as acknowledged to be his own, and was received by the people as from him, and the harvest, so consecrated, was secure to be reaped and gathered. Vast is the harvest of the dead, lying ungathered. The people of God of all generations, in the graves of earth and sea, under all skies, dust on dust, an immense community, precious beyond thought to him who died for them;

* 1 Cor. xv. 20.

what a field from which the angels may gather for the garners of heaven! It is all ready, only waiting "the voice of the Arch-angel and the trump of God," that the work may begin; for the first fruits have been already presented. Jesus, "the first begotten from the dead," hath passed within the vail, and now appears in the presence of God for us. Thus the whole harvest of the dead in Christ, is consecrated and pledged. It must be gathered, for the Lord is its owner. Oh glorious day, when the trump of God, sounding from heaven, shall give the signal, and "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," the dead in Christ shall all come forth! Oh that Jubilee, that year of all years, and end of all times, for which all circles and dispensations have been preparing; when every bondsman of the Lord's household, now in the captivity death, shall go free, and all debts of God's people to his law, shall be finally cancelled, and all the true Israel, from their wide dispersions, and separations, and bondage, shall go home, returning "to Zion with songs and everlasting joy on their heads;" when loved ones shall meet again to be no more divided, and the great family, the vast communion, the universal brotherhood of Christ, shall meet in their heavenly Jerusalem, to keep their feast of redemption and blessedness for evermore; every trace of the curse and the death abolished; every risen saint beholding in each brother, the likeness of the glory of his Lord! That will be "a holy convocation unto God," indeed. How will they crowd the battlements of Zion, to look down upon the deserted graves, and the whole vanquished and ruined dominion of death, whence they have been ransomed! How will they fill that Holy

City with their praises, as they cry, with one voice, "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then will it be said, as never before it could be said, "*The Lord is risen indeed*," risen in his *mystical* body, the Church, for which, in his natural body, he died and rose again. Then his work is done, redemption is complete; the fullness of his glory as the Saviour of sinners is consummated, and the year of his redeemed is come. Oh, may our eyes see that endless year! May our feet stand in thy gates, Oh Jerusalem, to have part with them that shall keep that feast!

Brethren, what shall we do that we may rise to that resurrection of life, and belong to that blessed company? I have time but for one brief answer, "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your *affections* on things above, not on things on the earth." Make Christ your heart's treasure and hope, and he will make you, and keep you, as his own dear treasure; and at last will receive you unto himself, as the crown jewels of his kingdom.

SERMON XX.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD IN CHRIST.

JOHN xi. 23.

"Thy brother shall rise again." *

THIS was the consolation administered by our Lord to the sorrowing sisters of his friend Lazarus, who was dead, and whose body had been already three days in the grave.

Martha and Mary had sent unto Jesus saying, "Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick." They had long in vain expected that he would visit them in their affliction, and heal their brother. Now that all was over, and it seemed too late to do any good except to help them bear their loss, they heard that Jesus was coming. Martha immediately went to meet him. "Mary sat still in the house." Her sister's first words were: "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died; but I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She had great faith in the intercession of Christ. She modestly suggested what her heart wished him to intercede for. Mary, when she afterwards met him, repeated her sister's lament: "Lord, if thou hadst

* Written immediately after the death of a dear son, and soon after the death of the author's eldest daughter. Re-written on the anniversary of the son's death—a father's remembrance, in this volume, of both.

been here my brother had not died." She made no request, nor suggested any. Probably she thought they had nothing now to do but to drink the cup of affliction that was given them, and to say in their hearts, "thy will be done."

To the half-uttered petition of Martha, Jesus said: "*Thy brother shall rise again.*" In the faith of the devout readers of the Old Testament scriptures, Martha replied: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection of the last day." The faith of God's people was strong and distinct, before the brighter revelation of the Gospel, as to the final and general resurrection of the dead, though Sadducees denied, and Pharisees corrupted, the doctrine. Martha knew not the whole meaning of Jesus concerning her brother, until she saw, what her heart was set on, Lazarus coming forth, *that day*, risen from the dead.

Here we may reasonably say—why should those affectionate and pious sisters have desired that their brother should rise from the dead, before that last day, when all tribulations will be ended, and they and he will never be separated again? He died in faith; he rests from his labors; he has no more tears to wipe away, no more conflicts with sin; his race is ended, his victory gained. Would ye call him back to such sorrows as belong to this vale of tears? Why say, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." Why *wish* he had not died; especially, why hope he may rise again, before the resurrection of all the dead?

But how natural that feeling and that desire of those afflicted sisters! And how often, in spirit, do we imitate them! Is it wise? A beloved one has died.

We have laid his precious remains in its narrow home, "looking for the general resurrection in the last day, and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ." We feel a precious confidence that he died in the Lord, and that therefore his soul is with the Lord; all sin, and pain, and trial, and peril of life eternal, ended, in the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Could we meet the Lord at the grave, and he should bid us ask what we would; what petition would our hearts, torn with bereavement, offer? Would it be, the opening of that grave; the restoration to us of that dear one—*to die again?* I cannot say what a poor, bleeding, heart would answer in its weakness. I fear it might say what Martha almost said, and did desire. But I know what would be the prayer of the wisest love—infinitely the best for him we love and mourn for,—Let the stone remain at the door of the sepulchre; let the seal continue unbroken upon the bonds of death; let dust, dwell with dust, and ashes with ashes, till there shall be no more death, nor pain, nor woes, nor sin; till that day when "corruption shall put on incorruption, and mortal immortality," and when "them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him," and "so they shall ever be with the Lord." Yes, brethren, the consolation with which Jesus meets us at every stage of our sorrow, concerning those who sleep in him; the sweet assurance which the hand of God's love has written for our faith to read, over every sepulchre of his people, is—*Thy brother, thy parent, thy sister, thy child, shall rise again;* and it is our privilege unspeakable to answer, (and oh, how a bereaved, believing, heart, does love that answer,) "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection of

the last day." It is enough. We bless thee, Lord, for that consolation. We ask no better. We will wait; patiently, thankfully, joyfully we will wait that day.

Brethren, we bring before you, to-day, the subject of "*the resurrection of the body.*" Conspicuous in the scriptures, under a variety of declarations, it has been prominent and positive in the creed of the Church of all ages. Precious to the hearts of those who mourn for the dead, it vitally concerns the completeness, and therefore the whole reality, of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. No doctrine of the scriptures was more utterly derided and rejected as impossible by the heathen philosophers, whom the Gospel encountered in its first aggressions into the territory of paganism. No doctrine was more constantly preached, or more boldly gloried in, by the primitive disciples of Christ. Paul boldly preached before the philosophers of Athens "*Jesus and the resurrection.*" The Stoics and Epicureans of that classic city, "mocked," because he did so. The primitive Christians triumphed in the expectation of a joyful resurrection of the body, though fires of martyrdom consumed it, or wild beasts of the amphitheatre devoured it; and that article of their faith was at once so notorious and so derided, that their persecutors burned all that remained of the martyrs, and then scattered the ashes on the rivers, and to the winds, to be borne to all lands—a contemptuous expression of how incredible they thought it that God should raise the dead.

But, let unbelief deride or reject as it may, we know, and we joyfully hold fast the faith, that "the earth and the sea shall give up their dead." Our brethren "that

sleep in the dust of the earth" "shall rise again in the resurrection of the last day." But it is important on a subject, so prominent in our creed, so mysterious in its details, so exclusively dependent upon revelation, on which imagination and speculation may so easily go astray and be wise above what is written, exposing themselves, and the subject, to the derision of the infidel, that we should know distinctly *what* is known concerning it, and on *what* grounds it is known. We take, therefore, our text, "*thy brother shall rise again;*" and our enquiry will be, *what is contained in that assurance,* and *what is its evidence?*

I. *What is contained in that assurance,* or what is meant in the scriptures by the resurrection of the dead?

What if I should tell you that it does not mean that the body of your brother, which you lay in the grave, will ever rise again; that the only meaning is that his soul shall, in the last day, be re-invested with some body to dwell in; not *its own body* that it before inhabited, but *a* body, no matter whence produced? Would you not answer me—can that be called a *resurrection* of the dead? Does not resurrection, in the very name, imply the rising up to life of that which did once live and is now dead? Call it a *substitution* for the dead, and we can understand it. But to call it a resurrection, is a glaring departure from the propriety of speech. So we say. But yet *that* is the idea of the resurrection which we too often find in books and in the thoughts of those who imagine they believe in the resurrection of the body—an idea invented for the purpose of escaping certain difficulties supposed to be otherwise insurmountable, but chargeable, we apprehend,

with the grave objection that it escapes the objections, not by maintaining the doctrine of a resurrection, but by changing it for another. Against all such evasions of the plain letter and testimony of the scriptures, I protest. When Jesus said to Martha, "thy brother shall rise again," did he mean that the body of her brother Lazarus, just buried, would rise; or some other body, no matter what or whence? If the latter, what was the consolation in her bereavement? And when she said, "I know that he shall rise in the last day," did she mean only that *some* body would be given his disembodied spirit in that day; or that the very body which she had loved, in which he had been accustomed to commune with her, which she regarded as an integral part of himself, and from which she was now separated by the barriers of the grave, would be restored to his spirit; that Lazarus, her brother, the same soul and the same body essentially, would live again? What speaks our Church on this head? We enter the grave yard, reading for the consolation of the bereaved, and as a solemn declaration of our faith, those words of holy Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand, at the latter day, upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, *yet in my flesh* shall I see God."* Job certainly expected to rise from the corruption of the grave *in his own flesh*, his own body, that very one which worms would devour, and not another. And why does our Church require these words of the Patriarch's faith to be read at the burial of her people, and why, as we lower the dead into the grave, does she make her minister say, "earth

* Job xix. 25, 27.

to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, looking for the general resurrection in the last day and the life of the world to come, through our Lord Jesus Christ, at whose second coming the earth and the sea shall give up their dead, and the corruptible bodies of those that sleep in him shall be changed and made like to his own glorious body?" It is all for the consolation of surviving Christian friends, to dry their tears, and fill their minds with expectation of a glorious victory over death and the grave, when the Lord of life, by the trump of God, will preach deliverance to the captives, and the opening of that prison-door to them that are bound. But where is the consolation, and what mockery to the afflicted, if, after all, it is not meant that your brother, like Job, shall stand up in his own flesh and see God—that the dust you give to dust—that the corruptible body of your beloved one, who sleeps in Jesus, shall hear that trump and live; but only that his immortal spirit, instead of being disembodied forever, shall have a body, *some* body, given to it in that day.*

No, brethren, the scripture doctrine of the resurrection of the body, that which lights the gloom of the grave,

* To make the doctrine of the identity of the resurrection-body more explicitly avowed in their declaration of faith, the Article in the Apostles' Creed, as adopted in the Greek and Latin Churches, is "*the resurrection of the flesh.*" This phrase was anciently used to guard against the idea that any other body than that which dies shall rise. In the Aquileian Creed it is still more pointed—*hujus carnis*—"the resurrection of *this* flesh." The Church of England, in her office of Baptism, has retained the article, as in the Latin Church. Where the question in our Prayer Book is, "Dost thou believe all the articles of the Christian faith as contained," &c. The English book puts the whole creed in the form of a question—"Dost thou believe in God, the Father," &c., and there we have "the resurrection of the flesh" instead of "the resurrection of the body." On this subject see Pearson on the Creed, Jackson's works, vol. iii. Tillotson's Sermons, No. 130.

that which Job professed, that which the martyrs gloried in, and philosophers of the heathen scoffed at, that which the Christian Church in all ages has declared, which the afflicted heart so affectionately clings to, which crowns the redemption that is in Jesus with its last victory, and which alone is worth contending for, is plainly that, in the resurrection, the Lord shall give to every man his own body; that the body out of which his soul departed, shall be raised up again, and the same soul that departed from it shall be restored and united to it again; and so the same man that died shall live again, in the same body in which he died."* When we say, *the same body in which he died,* we do not mean the same in all qualities and powers, but the same *essentially;* as the body from infancy to old age, from wasting sickness to perfect health, is the same, though there has taken place so great a change of constituent elements, and of condition, and of powers.

One would suppose that the very expression, "*resurrection of the dead,*" would suffice to settle that point. But what else shall we make of the words of Job—"though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God;" or the words of Daniel, "Many that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake;" or of Christ, "the hour cometh when all that are in their graves shall come forth;" or of St. John, "the sea shall give up the dead which are in it;" or of St. Paul, "It (the body) is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory."† What else can be the meaning of such phrases as "*the redemption of our body,*"‡ or such a promise as that "he that raised up Christ from the dead, *shall also quicken your mortal*

*Beveridge's Sermons, No. 72. †Job xix. 26. Dan. xii. 2. John v. 28. Rev. xx. 13. 1 Cor. xv. 42, 43. ‡Rom. viii. 23.

bodies?"* What else, when we are exhorted to "fear him who is able to destroy both soul and *body* in hell?" Is it not meant that the present body, as well as the present soul, may be destroyed in hell? Again, "it is better to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire."† It is the identical body that was maimed in this world in faithful service to God, that shall enter the life of the world to come; surely not some other body in its stead.

Paul thought he was addressing very comforting words to the Thessalonian brethren, when he said, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep (your beloved ones in the grave) that ye sorrow not as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."‡ But what consolation was it, what mockery of their sorrow was it, if they whom God will bring with Jesus in that day shall not be those very dead which they mourned after, but some other bodies which they never knew, and that never died? Certainly, the several instances of resurrection which have already taken place, and of which we read in the scriptures, especially that of our Lord and Saviour, are intended to teach us by example, what the general rising of the dead will be? But in each case, was it not the identical body buried, which lived again?

To show the power of our Lord's resurrection, and how essentially the resurrection of his people must follow in consequence of his, we read that "after his resurrection,

* Rom. viii. 11. † Matt. x. 28; & xviii. 8. ‡ 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

many bodies of saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many."* The passage is too plain to be evaded. The very bodies which had died, came out of their graves and appeared. How long they had been in their graves, what changes had taken place, whether they had fallen to dust or not, we are not told. We are at liberty to suppose what we please on such points. The evidence is, that no matter how changed by death, or how changed in being quickened again, the identical bodies, that died and were buried, arose. That resurrection was the antepast of that glorious day when the whole fruit of the resurrection of Christ shall appear; when another great earthquake shall be felt, and all graves will be opened, and all the bodies of them that sleep in Jesus, shall arise and go into the Holy City—New Jerusalem; and shall appear in "the white raiment which is the righteousness of saints," and "death shall be swallowed up in victory."

The second appearing of our Lord will find a part of his Church alive on the earth—"*the quick;*" but it will find very far the largest portion asleep, as to their bodies, in the grave—"*the dead.*" Concerning these two divisions of the Church, it is written, "the dead in Christ shall rise first, then they which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord."† Certainly they which are alive in that day, shall be taken to meet, and to be, with the Lord, in the very bodies in which they were found. They shall be changed indeed, from corruptible to incorruptible, yea into the likeness of the

* Matt. xxvii. 52. † 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

glorious body of Christ; yet remaining essentially the same bodies. But how are we assured of this, except from language exactly equalled in strength and plainness in relation to the dead. "The dead shall be raised." The living "shall be changed." Which of these expressions is strongest in proof of the identity in question? Will the very small remnant of the people of God which shall be alive at the coming of Christ, be the only portion of his people that will then enjoy a *perfect* redemption, a redemption of the whole man—a redemption of the body from the curse of sin to newness of life, as well as a redemption of the soul; and shall all the rest, constituting almost the whole of "the general assembly and Church of the first born whose names are written in heaven," shall they be redeemed only in part, their bodies left under the dominion of death; the works of the devil in them not destroyed by him who came to destroy them? Must they, instead of having restored to them their own bodies, and being thus blessed, like Enoch and Elijah and the saints that arose after the crucifixion, and like all those who, without having died, shall be changed at the voice of the Archangel; must they alone be consigned to bodies, entirely alien from their own? Such was not the expectation of Job: "In my flesh shall I see God." And if such were the doctrine of resurrection which Paul preached at Athens, why did the philosophers mock at it? Was there any difficulty in their believing that the same God who made the first body for the soul to inhabit, could as easily make for it a second? And where was the meaning of the scattering of the ashes of the martyrs by their persecutors, to the winds and waters, in derision of

the resurrection? Did they suppose that in that contemptuous act they offered any impediment to the resurrection which the Christians believed and taught, except as it was a resurrection of the very body thus dispersed? And why, if this be not our just expectation, is the prayer uttered at every reception of the sacrament of the death of Christ: "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve *thy body* and soul unto everlasting life?"

Now, such being so evidently the doctrine of scripture, that you may wonder why I should spend so much time in showing it to be, you may well desire me to state what are the objections to it that have caused the invention of the substitute which I have mentioned; objections on account of which heathen sages thought it incredible that God should raise the dead, and many like them, under greater light, have not been wiser. I know of but two objections that deserve a name. One is founded simply on the infinite dispersion which the bodies of the dead undergo. Take, for example, the bodies of Adam, and Noah, and Abraham. Where are they? Resolved into original elements—all their particles are still in being, but where? Let the imagination follow them through air and earth and sea. The objection is against the possibility of thence collecting such scattered elements and composing again the bodies they once belonged to. But it comes only from those who know not the power of God. He can do all things which involve not a contradiction. He that made the world out of nothing, can he not re-construct the body when its materials are all in being? Every stage and step of the dispersion has been only by his

power and guidance. *He* made that dissolution—*he* effected that minute dispersion—*he* gave to every particle its direction, whithersoever it went, and assigned its place, wherever in earth, or air, or sea, it may be now. Known unto God, is the place and history of every particle of matter, in all his works, from each grain in the structure of all worlds, to every atom in the frame of the animalcule swimming in the rain drop. And can he not call back what he has sent abroad? Can he not gather together what he has scattered? Is there any skill or power required for this, beyond what we experience continually in the wonderful power and skill by which our living bodies are nourished and renewed from day to day; that mysterious skill which extracts, with such unfailing chemistry, from the air and the water, from vegetable and animal substance, whatever our bodies need for life, and which so marvellously assorts and combines them, in weight and measure, and sends to their several places and offices in our frames, the various aliments, so that every minutest part of this most complex structure shall daily receive its portion in due season? It was well said by a Jewish Rabbi: "He who made that which was not, to be, can certainly make that which once was, to be again." The only answer needed to the objection stated, is, "*The Lord God Omnipotent reigneth.*"

But there is an objection of much more apparent force. It is not based so much on the wide dispersion of the elements of the bodies of the dead, as upon the innumerable combinations into which they have entered. It is urged that those elements have been taken into the structure of vegetables, and that animals have been nourished by those

vegetables—and men have fed on those animals, and thus, doubtless, in innumerable instances, the particles of one human body have entered into the composition of another; and so the difficulty is presented, *How can two bodies, each of which has been constituted in part by the same particles of matter, be both raised up?* This is really the only plausible objection. Its force is in the contradiction which it seems to involve. That contradiction depends on the assumption that, in order to the identity of the body in death and the resurrection, *the same numerical particles* must compose it. If there may be essential identity, without numerical sameness in all the parts, the contradiction is avoided, and the objection fails. But all nature testifies to that point. The oak that has stood a hundred years, may not have an atom of the substance which composed its germ in the acorn, and yet nobody questions the identity of the body of the tree and the germ. The human body, at sixty years of age, has undergone repeatedly, since its infancy, an entire change of constituent elements, so that it contains not now a single particle that belonged to it in childhood. But does any one question its being essentially the same body? It is therefore a familiar fact, that we may preserve our corporeal identity without preserving a numerical sameness of parts. Nothing is a man more sure of, than that the body he has now, is the same he had in infancy. Nothing, however, does he know more certainly, than that its constituent atoms have meanwhile been entirely changed. What, then, if the difference should be as great between the body buried, and that which shall be raised, (though there is no necessity of supposing

it,) might they not be as truly the same body as my present tabernacle is the same that my soul inhabited when I was a child? And thus have we not all we need for the resurrection of the dead, in the full, literal sense of the scriptures?

St. Paul seems to have had in view precisely this method of answering, when he supposed some caviller to ask him, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" He answered, by referring to the growth of the wheat-stalk from the seed, as we have answered by the growth of the oak from the acorn, or the man from the infant. "That which thou sowest (said he) is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body."*

The reasoning is; The wheat in the stalk is essentially the wheat that was first in the seed. The seed will not spring forth into wheat except it die. The human body, in order to its resurrection, must go into the corruption of the grave. And when the seed is grown into the beauty of the ripening plant, how great is the change; where are the particles it possessed when it lay a mere grain in the ground? God, in thus arraying it, as Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed, giveth it a body as it pleaseth him. But, in all that change, from the corrupting grain to the beautiful stalk and blade of the wheat, he so preserves the corporeal identity, that he gives "to every seed its own body"—*the wheat and the germ are one*—so is

* 1 Cor. xv. 36—38.

the resurrection of the dead. What it is that is essential to such identity, we know not. It is enough here to know that it is not *numerical sameness of particles*. The rest we are well satisfied to leave with him who is "the God of the dead, as well as the living."*

To the question, "*how* are the dead raised up?" we have no further answer. The matter of fact is plainly revealed. But *how*, he whose "footsteps are not known" will accomplish such a wondrous work, thus swallowing up death in such universal and stupendous victory, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump," his word speaks not, man knows not. Tell me how he created the world, and I will tell you how he will raise the dead. Tell me how, by his word, all things were made, and I will tell how, at his last trump, "the earth and the sea shall give up their dead." Our confidence is in the promise and power of God. "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth;" and, therefore, because that Almighty One hath decreed it, "I believe in the resurrection of the body."

And, now having spoken of the essential sameness of the body in the resurrection, we must speak of the changes it will nevertheless undergo.

But here we encounter a passage which, for some minds,

* "It is impossible to say, (observes an excellent writer,) that there remains not, somewhere, amidst the elements to which it (the body) is reduced, a germ however imperceptible, from which the immortal body may yet develop itself in an instant. Too little is known of that wondrous principle, whatever it be, which remains through life, and gives to the body the same peculiar, individual form, aspect and identity, distinguishing it from all others, though every perceptible particle be repeatedly changed and renewed"—"*The Last Enemy*," by George Burgess, D.D., Bp. of the Diocese of Maine—a book of much thought and spiritual wealth, which cannot be read by a serious mind without benefit. It should be much better known than it is.

needs explanation. St. Paul, with reference to this very subject, says: "*Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*"* At first view, the former clause of this verse seems contradictory to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, in any literal sense. But to that interpretation, it is justly answered, that our Saviour's body, after he had risen from the dead, was *flesh*, and surely *that* inherits the kingdom of God. Thomas' unbelief was cured by touching it; and when uneasy thoughts arose in the other disciples' minds, lest after all it was only a spirit that appeared to them, Jesus said, "Why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I, myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not *flesh* and *bones* as ye see me have."† The meaning of the clause objected, appears from that which follows it by way of explication;—"*Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.*" The phrase, "*flesh and blood,*" is a synonyme for our bodies *as they now are*—corruptible, mortal, full of infirmities, having wants and appetites belonging to their present earthly state. As thus situated, they cannot inherit the kingdom of God; because they are not adapted to its life, and employment, and spirituality. They must be changed; not so that they shall cease to be flesh, but cease to be flesh as it now is. "All flesh, (saith the Apostle,) is not the same flesh." "There are celestial *bodies*, and *bodies* terrestrial." "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." And, "as we have borne the image of the earthy, (the first Adam,) we shall also bear the image of the heavenly,"

* 1 Cor. xv. 50. † John xx. 27. Luke xxiv. 37—39.

"the Lord from heaven."* The body as well as the soul must be made "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." The soul is made so, by being born again of the Holy Ghost, and finally restored, by a perfect holiness, to the perfect mind of Christ, the image and likeness of God. The body also must be born again, and by the same Holy Spirit. It is "dead, because of sin." "But, if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."† Hence, the resurrection of the dead in Christ is called "*the regeneration.*"‡ "We shall not all sleep, but *we shall all be changed.*" Vast and wonderful, indeed, must be the change that will fit and prepare this frail and mortal body, especially after the corruption of the grave, for the habitation of God, the vision of his glory, the communion of his kingdom, the society of angels, the employments of heaven, the life eternal. Great, indeed, must be the change to prepare it to be a suitable, congenial companion, and instrument of the soul, in the perfect holiness and boundless activity and vigor of its heavenly state. The disembodied spirit, accustomed to the communion of saints made perfect, and to the ineffable glory of the presence of God, when it comes to re-enter its tabernacle, must find therein, not only every vestige of the fall; every remnant of the dominion and curse of sin, every mark of death, every infirmity of an earthly state, obliterated; but a newness of life, a purity, an energy, and activity, adapting it to participate with, instead of encumbering, its own inconceivably vigorous, active,

* 1 Cor. xv. 39—47, 49. † Rom. viii. 10, 11. ‡ Matt. xix. 28.

and exalted powers. Without such change, the risen body would be no more capable of the kingdom of God, than a worm, without the transformation undergone in the chrysalis, would be capable of the new element, and new life, and food, and pleasures, and occupations, of the butterfly; or, than the seed in the ground, unchanged, unquickened, can exhibit the properties, and perform the functions, and answer the ends, of the growing and ripening wheat. A change is to be made of worlds, from earth to heaven; and a change must be made of the body, from earthy to heavenly; from corruption to incorruption; from mortal to immortality. That change *must* be made; because the body, as much as the soul, has a title, in Christ, to an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven. Christ came to redeem *us;* not our souls only, but *ourselves*, just as we are, body and soul, "from all iniquity," from all its condemnation, dominion and curse; to destroy the work of the devil entirely, in the flesh and in the spirit. One, as much as the other, was bought with the price of his blood, and is *his*. Whatever is *his*, he will have; and neither death nor life shall finally separate it from him. To leave the bodies of his people under the power of death, would be to leave his work of redemption unfinished; his own mystical body incomplete. *Man* would not be saved—for man is corporeal, as well as spiritual. Hence, "this corruptible *must* put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality."* Of the greatness and glory of the change, we can form but the least and most inadequate conception; just as we can conceive so little of that whole transformation by which the soul is finally adapted, out of its present

* 1 Cor. xv. 53.

fallen state, to the holiness and glory of its heavenly portion. All is done by St. Paul that language can do, to give us the idea. But all language fails. In this life we must needs see such things through a glass, very darkly. We necessarily think as children, understand as children, just the spelling-book, the merest elements. The resurrection day alone can teach us any more. When we rise, we shall know. But let us take some of the words of St. Paul, and think of them. "*It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption;*" raised as pure and deathless as the soul that comes to inhabit it again. "*It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.*" Now a "vile body," and deeply dishonored by the humiliating process of death, and burial, and dissolution, so that it is put out of the sight of the living, as a spectacle not to be looked on; it shall be changed into a habitation as far beyond its present state, as the heavenly mansions exceed in glory the grave from which it will be raised. "*Sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power;*" power to endure such a vision of God, and to sustain such an "exceeeding and eternal weight of glory;" power to endure forever, and to mount with the soul to all the heights, and go with it, in all its vast excursions, and endless occupations and enjoyments. "*It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.*" *Natural* here means animal; *spiritual* is here used in opposition, not to corporeal, but animal; a body spiritualized, deprived of its animal properties, and weaknesses, and wants; a body made as perfectly conformed to the nature and uses of the spirit dwelling therein, as a material body can be; so that instead of one encumbering the other, or feeling itself impeded by the other, there shall be such

perfect harmony that both shall be one in every thing; not the body now, and now the spirit, but the whole redeemed man so perfect, that there shall be a complete oneness of participation in all works, all occupations, all blessedness.

But the highest reach of language, in describing the change in the resurrection, is that of St. Paul, to the Philippians. He tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ, at his second coming, "shall change our vile body, *that it may be fashioned like unto his own glorious body.*"* Fallen in Adam, we bear *his* image in body and soul; redeemed in Christ, we must bear *his* image, also, in body and soul. Members of Christ, we must be as he is. Ever to be with the Lord, in the body; he will qualify our bodies for that blessedness, by making them like his own glorious body. The harvest will be as the first fruits. We shall not only see his glory, but partake therein. Our Lord will be the pattern, and architect, of our resurrection. In the first creation, God made man after his own image and likeness. The completion of the new creation, by Jesus Christ, will be the finishing of his own likeness in the risen bodies of his people. What is the glory of the glorious body of Christ, it hath not entered into the mind of man to conceive. The light "above the brightness of the sun," in which he appeared at the transfiguration, and the sight of which the three disciples could not endure, was intended to give some idea of that glory. But we wait the beatific vision. Meanwhile, we are satisfied with the assurance of St. John: "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be

* Phil. iii. 20, 21.

like him, for we shall see him as he is."* One thing, however, we know, that the full and glorious triumph of redeeming grace and power, the fullness of the victory over sin and death, will not be consummated till the resurrection day. It cannot be, while the body of a single saint is under the dominion of death. It cannot be, until the earth and the sea shall be made to give up their dead. It cannot be, till all they that sleep in Jesus are brought with him, and changed into his own likeness. Your brother, whose soul is now with the Lord, must rise in the body from the grave, or the Saviour's work will not be finished. But, writes the Apostle, "WHEN this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality, THEN shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, '*Death is swallowed up in victory.*'" Then shall the triumphal song of the whole redeemed Church be heard, "O, death, where is thy sting! O, grave, where is thy victory! Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."†

If, in this discourse, we have only spoken of the resurrection of the righteous, it must not be forgotten that *all* the graves are to give up their dead—"some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt."‡ We are to be "judged according to the deeds done in the body;" and in the body must all be, in order to be so judged.

But for this most painful part of our subject, we have not time—except to say, that while the same identity shall be preserved, there will be a change in the resurrection of the unrighteous, corresponding to that of the righteous; mortal changed to immortality, corruptible that of incor-

*1 John iii. 2. †1 Cor. xv. 54–57. ‡Dan. xii. 2.

ruption, weakness raised in power; in order that those who are to "go away into everlasting punishment," may be fitted, in the body, for its endurance, as well as that those who are to enter into life eternal, may be fitted for its enjoyment.

And now we have seen probably as much as we can know here, of what the rising of the dead means, especially of those who sleep in Jesus. And what precious consolation does the gospel thus bring to the aching hearts of bereaved believers! "*Thy brother shall rise again.*" Yes, answers Martha, sorrowing over some recently tenanted grave, "but not till the last day. Oh, that he could *now* come to life again!" No, the wise Christian heart replies, it is a great part the consolation that he will not rise *now*, while death still reigns, and sorrow, and sighing have not fled away; that he will not rise till *that day*, when all things shall be made new, "the times of the restitution of all things," when he can come forth in a body that will never die again; into a world where there shall be no more sin, or pain, or woe; in company with the whole harvest of the dead in Christ, his holy brotherhood, and then go with that whole blessed company to be "ever with the Lord." This is our "garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." "Precious in the sight of the Lord, is the death," and even the dust, "of his saints." Not a Christian's grave is there, in the silent city of the dead, but is well known to him—well watched and kept under his care—though its memorial, for human eye, has centuries ago been lost. As we walk along those solemn streets, a voice seems to say, "these all shall rise again." Then we think of the dead of all generations, since the world began; the graves in land and sea; the

whole earth a cemetery of unknown millions! Not a particle of their dust has perished, however widely it has wandered. All are waiting "the day of redemption." What a multitude that cannot be numbered, of God's beloved people, are there,—the tribes of his true Israel, dispersed through all lands, enduring the captivity of death, but "*prisoners of hope*," listening for "the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God." Then shall the earth cast forth her dead, and *all* shall come forth, and rejoin the souls from which they have been so long divorced; and then shall be joy among the angels of God, to welcome home to Zion the children of that long, and dark, captivity. They "return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." They are clothed in the white raiment of their Redeemer's righteousness. The shout of victory, and praise, and gladness, is heard from every heart. Rank upon rank, a boundless congregation, they press towards "the throne of God and the Lamb," to "shew forth the praises of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light." It is the "royal priesthood, the holy nation," gathered out of all nations, and people, and kindred, and tongues. The Lord of Glory, having finished his work, begins that endless Sabbath. His Church, "without spot or wrinkle," walking with him, "in white," keeps holy that long hoped-for day of eternal rest. They are "joint-heirs with Christ"; He, "glorified in them;" they, glorified in him. *His* joy is in beholding in them "the travail of his soul;" *their* joy is in beholding in him "the author and finisher of their faith," and their portion forever. Oh, what believer would wake the sleep of a brother in Christ—sleeping in death

till the last trump of that day of days shall call him; till he can rise in that great communion and fellowship, and begin that Sabbath! No, beloved one, we will wait in hope. Sleep on, in thy silent, lowly bed, till this stormy sea is passed, and the war of sin and hell is ended, and the last vial of wrath is poured upon the earth. Come not again to us, till we are ready to mount with thee to the heavenly gates. The time is short. The day will soon break. Farewell, precious one, till then!

But St. Paul has an exhortation for the living, founded on the assurance of that day: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." With such perfect redemption in view, such a day in prospect—an inheritance of life eternal, for body and soul, in the glory of God—shall anything move you from the steadfast, unshaken, setting of your hearts and the earnest devotion of your lives to the obedience of Christ? Shall any temptations seduce, any trials discourage, any wrath of man affright you, from the patient continuance in well doing, knowing, as you do, that not the least moment of your labor, or trial, or patience, or suffering, shall be in vain in the Lord; that all will ripen unto, and that all will bring forth fruit abundantly in, that great harvest. The Lord strengthen us thus to abide, seeking our rest not here, on these troubled waves, this open sea, where all winds blow and rage, but in that haven where only the anchor of the soul is cast, and where *remaineth* the rest of the people of God. *Amen.*

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

SERMON XXI.

THE FINAL SATISFACTION OF THE BELIEVER IN JESUS.

Ps. xvii. 15.

"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness."

THE Psalmist was in affliction—oppressed by the wicked, who compassed him in his steps (v. 11) and were in worldly prosperity. He described their prosperity, however, as that which he did not envy. It was of very brief duration. "*They have their portion in this life.*" What a poor portion is that which only lasts till we get to the grave! Can any thing so short-lived, so uncertain, so unsatisfactory, deserve the name of *riches?* When the Psalmist looked at the portion of the ungodly, in that light, and then turned his eyes upon the portion of the righteous, in the life to come, that incorruptible inheritance, that unfading joy, the well grounded hope of which is wealth indeed; he felt how little a child of God could ever have reason to feel as if his lot in this life were hard. "As for me, (said he,) I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness."

We shall confine our attention, in this discourse, chiefly to the latter clause of the it—"*I shall be satisfied when I*

awake, with thy likeness." You see the connection here, between our being *in the likeness of God*, and being *satisfied.* The connection is essential. There cannot be, in this life, or in the life to come, a satisfied heart, a man possessed of real happiness, except as he is in the likeness of God. To illustrate that connection, is the chief object of the present discourse.

"*I shall be satisfied.*" A man perfectly *satisfied!* Can there be such a miracle? Every desire of his heart content, every capacity of his being filled! We can form no higher idea of a man entirely happy. What a marvel would such a fellow creature be to the rest of the human family; such a perfect rest of heart, on this troubled sea of heaving, tumultuous, conflicting, desires! Was there ever a satisfied man on the earth? Yes, because there was a time on the earth when there was no sin. I suppose it will be conceded that our first father, as long as he continued as God created him, before the malice of Satan had succeeded in persuading him to desire what was forbidden, knew no want, had no care, was conscious of no imperfection in his portion, had no void in his heart. Every power of his mind found adequate exercise; every affection of his heart found commensurate objects, in which there could be no disappointment. This was essential to the perfectness of his original state.

But the question arises, whence came his satisfaction? On what did it depend? Ah, says the wounded spirit, afflicted by some grievous bereavement, or chafed with the thousand disappointments of the world, he was in the garden of Paradise. All around him was perfectness. There was no uncertainty in his blessings, so long as he

obeyed God. Disappointed expectations were not his lot. An aching void, in the midst of abundance, was not his burden. There was no death to blight his every hope and turn every joy to mourning! These, we grant, were precious appurtenances of happiness. They went very far to fill up his cup. But they fell unspeakably short of the real, essential, constitution of his blessedness. Man, invested with dominion over all the creatures around him, and possessed of an immortal mind, by which he is made so superior to them all, must find a source of happiness, not in what is beneath, but in what is above him; in a nature with which his highest powers may commune, and from the fullness of which they may be ever receiving. That superior nature is the Creator. The perfect man lived in direct, unreserved, continual communion with God. He saw God's face in righteousness. The river was in free communication with the tides of the ocean, and hence its own fullness.

Now the question occurs, how took place that free communion of man with God? What qualified him for it? On what basis was it erected? There was nothing like it between the Creator and any other individual of his earthly creation. The answer is found in that which distinguished the creation of man from that of every other earthly being. God said "*Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness.*" Likeness to God, in intelligence and holiness, was the single, the essential basis of Adam's communion with him, and thus of his perfect felicity.

There can be no communion between any beings but on the basis of likeness. Brutes and men can have no

communion, because they have neither intellectual nor moral likeness. Adam, though surrounded with the loveliness of Eden, and with all the obedient creatures over whom he was vested with dominion, had no earthly being with whom his mind and heart could communicate, until a companion had been created in his *own image and likeness;* and the Most High God had none, among all his perfect works of animate nature, that could know and love him, and be enriched in communion with his infinite wisdom and holiness, until he had made man *in his own image,* a being of intelligence and holiness.

I need not pause to show how essential to that likeness in man, to God, was *holiness.* To have been only a rational being, however exalted in intellectual powers, would have been no adequate qualification for communion with God. Such are the fallen angels, and none so far from, so incapable of, such communion. "*Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy,*"* is an exhortation founded on an intrinsic necessity, that if we would see God, face to face, in the happiness of his kingdom hereafter, or if we would now draw near to him in communion of soul with him, as the Father of our spirits, we must be, as he is, *holy.* Hence the real ground of the communion between the man unfallen, and his Maker, and consequently of all his felicity. He was like God, not only in being holy; but in being perfectly holy. He did not, in the language of the text, *awake* up, as if out of another state, in the likeness of God; but from the dust out of which he was made, he arose, at the first, in that likeness, perfectly holy; and h *was satisfied.*

*Lev. xix. 2, and 1 Pet. i. 15, 16.

But what a painful contrast to this, has the world presented, ever since that first man, in his first estate! *Never satisfied,* is the brief history. Immortal minds, driving to and fro over the earth, in search of something, they know not what, to appease desires they do not comprehend; minds never at rest, conscious of having been created for something not attained, and of possessing capacities of enjoyment which are never filled, wandering further and further, and becoming more needy and less satisfied as they wander. Such is the human race. The word most used in the scriptures to express that dissatisfied, craving state of mind, is *thirst*—the thirst of a wanderer who has lost his way in a dry and barren land, where no water is—and nothing can be more appropriate. A thirsty man can be satisfied with nothing but *water.* Other things may promise, but cannot fulfill; may create hope, but only to disappoint; may for the time appease, only to make thirst, by and by, the more intolerable. A *heart* athirst, as it must be by its own nature, must have the "*living water,*" those supplies which no finite source can furnish, even the fullness of God; or it only becomes more and more athirst and craving. And that thirst, unsatisfied here, must go on forever, in the world hereafter. Beyond the grave, will it shew its real power. Here, in the present life, it is all the while under the delusion of a dream. The unsatisfied heart, living away from God, is constantly plied with false reliances and deceitful expectations which prevent the consciousness of its real want and beggary. There is yet a scheme to try, yet a hope to test—a broken cistern to go to. The world keeps up a constant succession of expectations, and so sustains the dream. But,

by and by, comes death and banishes every delusion, and takes the soul away to an eternity where, not only is its whole condition forever fixed, but perfectly understood and realized. The thirst of heart remains; the faculties, created to be satisfied only in God, remain; the man is there just the same that he was here, only with every power of mind intensely quickened, and every want therefore intensely felt, and every hope perfectly destroyed. There is nothing new to be tried; no dream to afford a transient relief; nothing but self to feed on. Oh! then must the heart experience within itself, in its own aching, growing, burning, exacting, hopeless desires, "a worm that dieth not, and a fire that cannot be quenched." Then will wants, now kept under and in comparative peace, by deceitful hopes, be kindled into a fierce flame of entire despair, exhibiting, what it were well for us now to know, better than we do, that man, alienated from God, carries always with him in this life, in the large and unappeased desires of his nature, the essential element of his fiery torment in the world to come, an element all ready for its work and waiting only the breath of the Almighty, in the sentence of eternal banishment, to kindle it.

And now let us put the question, what can relieve the unsatisfied heart in the present life? Suppose this whole world a paradise; death with all its train of woes exterminated; every thing about us restored to its condition as it was, before sin introduced the curse and blight; suppose nothing unrestored but *man; he,* however, again in paradise, but still the fallen man, holding no communion of heart with God, and incapable, by the state of his heart, of such communion! Will he be satisfied? The mass of

mankind, not knowing themselves, will say, Certainly, what more can he want? But I say, Something infinitely more and better, and more exalted, he does and must want. He is without God. And it is the fixed decree of the Almighty, established on the day of creation, and written then in the constitution of our nature, never to be canceled, that the faculties of our minds, and the affections of our hearts are never to be satisfied but in the love, in the communion, of our Creator. The brute, without a rational soul, pastures upon the ground, and is satisfied. Of the earth he is earthy; and is therefore contented with the earth. But man must have higher aliment than the creature. His nature, though not divine, is so fashioned, that divinity alone can meet its wants. He is not infinite, but infinity alone, the boundless riches of the grace and love of God alone, can satisfy. Communion of heart and soul with God, on the essential basis of likeness in spiritual character, is the great law of human happiness. He who stationed the sun at the center of our planetary system, and bound it for a law in the being of our every star, that it shall keep perpetual orbit round that sun, and never shine but as it holds communion with its light; *he* hath placed himself as the central and only source of blessedness to all his intelligent creatures, ordaining forever, that they shall live in communion of spirit with him, or live in utter spiritual beggary without him; and the planet that should break its orbit would not more necessarily become a darkened wanderer, than must a soul, alienated from God, become more and more benighted and miserable, a wanderer in the outer darkness, further and further. The earth may pass away, but that law written

man's being, can never pass away. Men may not care to think of it or believe it, but *it is written*. There are multitudes indeed, who cherish a proud feeling of independence of God, and to whom nothing seems more foreign than that they should have any need of his communion. If they can escape the power of his wrath, it is all they suppose they need. They will trust their own resources, and will be the architects of their own happiness, and will be indebted to none else for its materials. But still that *dependence*, in spite of them, remains. Satisfied without God, they cannot be. So hath he ordained from the foundation of the world. Were it even possible for this earth, by its own resources, to meet their wants, all things therein are laid under the interdict of the Almighty, which forbids them to afford a home or resting place to the heart of man, so long as he continues apostate and ex-communicate from his Maker.

Thus we arrive at the basis of one of the great doctrines of the Gospel, concerning our salvation: "*Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God;*" the necessity of a new birth, a new creation, by the Holy Ghost. For if communion with God be essential to present satisfaction; much more must it be to the heavenly blessedness. And if there can be no communion without likeness; if without being like God in holiness of heart, we cannot be qualified for his holy presence, then must that image of God in which man was originally created, and which is now lost, be created in man anew. These two points the scriptures settle without dispute: *first*, that "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord;" *secondly*, that without being born again of the Holy Ghost, no man can have

holiness. The universal description of those who live, and are capable of living, in the communion and fellowship of an infinitely holy God, is, "*We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.*"* Love is the very element of that communion. "He that loveth me (said the Saviour) shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." "We will come unto him and make our abode with him." †

But, saith the Psalmist, in the text, "I shall be satisfied *when I awake*, with thy likeness." He puts off, you perceive, the time of his being satisfied in the communion of God, to *another life*. But why so? Hath he not that communion now? Doth he not already sing, in the joy of his soul, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" ‡ Is he not seated beside the waters of that full river, "the streams whereof make glad the City of God," and of which it is the privilege of every inhabitant of that city to drink? Why then is he not satisfied already? And the same we ask concerning every citizen of the commonwealth of Israel. He is not satisfied yet; he is looking forward to another life, to be satisfied. And yet, has he not been created anew in Christ Jesus, and thus restored to the image of God; and so to his blessed communion? Is it not now his privilege, and is he not qualified by the new affections of his heart, to draw nigh to God, and pour out his soul before him, in love and praise; and doth not God, according to his own word, "make his abode with him;" and hath he not the promise of the Saviour, "*He that believeth on me shall*

* Eph. ii. 10. † John xiv. 21—23. ‡ Ps. xxvii. 1.

never thirst?"* And yet he does thirst; he is not satisfied. How is this?

We answer: In one very important sense the child of God is satisfied *now*. He is so satisfied with what he has obtained in God, that he desires nothing *in its stead*, but only more of *that*. Men of the world are not satisfied, because they want some things else than they possess. The child of God is so satisfied that he only wants more of what he possesses. The traveler in a desert land, after many days of painful thirst, going from place to place, for water, and finding every promised spring dried up, at length finds the overflowing fountain. It is sufficient. He will seek no further. He thinks not of substituting the sand of the desert for its waters. *More* of it he will want. Other than it, he wants not, and thus is he *satisfied*. Thus sat David besides such a fountain, when he sung, "My heart is fixed, O, God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise."† He had been seeking fixedness and rest of heart too much in earthly hopes. One dependence after another had been sought, and trusted in, and had failed. Now, his affections have found a sure resting place. He has taken God for his refuge and exclusive portion. His heart, therefore, is *fixed;* and certain that he cannot be disappointed in that trust, he can sing for joy, and give praise out of the fullness of his gratitude. He is *satisfied*. He knows he has found what he needed. There is nothing else to be sought. Nothing can add to the sufficiency of that portion. "Whom have I, in heaven, but thee; and there is none upon earth I desire beside thee.

* John vi. 35. † Ps. lvii. 7.

My strength and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion, forever."*

David's experience, in that respect, is still the experience of the people of God. The sinner, who, in his state of alienation from God, has been wandering from one device to another, seeking rest and finding none, and who is now brought to seek in Christ, the peace of God, and there to fix his heart, is *satisfied*. He knows he has chosen that good part which cannot disappoint him. He is not making a mere experiment. When the question arises, "Who will show us any good?" his answer is at hand "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us."†

But still, while David's heart was thus fixed on God, there was an important sense in which he was not satisfied What exceeding strength of language does he use to express his earnest longings for a more perfect rest! "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O, God! My soul is athirst for God. When shall I come to appear before the presence of God!"‡ There is evidently a deep feeling of dissatisfaction with present attainment. But what is he thirsting for? Something besides God, or only more of God? The more he is satisfied, the more he wants. Having experienced such delight in God, under the imperfections of the present life, he longs for the time when he may stand in open vision, in God's immediate presence, and when his cup will be full. Thus it is that the promise of Jesus, "he that drinketh of the water that I will give him shall never thirst," is not all fulfilled in the present life. The godly soul, drinking of that water, does thirst; and thirsts

* Ps. lxxiii. 25, 26. † Ps. iv. 6. ‡ Ps. xlii. 1, 2.

the more because he drinks. His desire of more is quickened by what he has. Because he has tasted how gracious the Lord is, therefore he cries, in spirit, "when shall I come to appear before the presence of God," and thus see him as he is? Jesus now manifests himself unto him as he doth not to the world; but not as he doth to the saints in heaven. Hence, he cannot be satisfied. And the simple reason is that the likeness of God in him is yet imperfect, and hence his communion with God is imperfect. He is like God, inasmuch as he is truly holy; he is not like him, inasmuch as he is but imperfectly holy. He is God's child in all his features, but in none of them with maturity of growth. It is his privilege to have access to his Father who is in Heaven, but it is the access of a child in the nursery, under restraint and discipline. The rod of chastening is yet needed. The pain of the hiding of the Father's countenance has sometimes to be endured. He is fed upon the King's meat, but not yet permitted to sit down at the King's table. Joseph loved his brethren, and knew them when they stood before him in the house of Pharaoh, and he yearned over them and longed to make himself known to them, but the time was not come; they must have some further trials before they would be prepared for him to drop the veil and say, "*I am Joseph.*" As yet, therefore, they ate of the food which Joseph sent, but they ate not at the table where Joseph was. Thus God sends now to his people, in this world, the communications of his love; the precious gifts of his Spirit; the bread which giveth eternal life. He comforts and sustains and rejoices their hearts; but he receives them not yet to the full communion and sat-

isfaction of the saints "made perfect." It is not because he does not love them enough; but because they are not yet sanctified enough. The veil is that of their own hearts. There is darkness remaining there which can have no fellowship with him who is Light. There is unholiness remaining there, which can have no communion with Him whose holiness makes even the heavens unclean. In this imperfect, but progressive, sanctification, we can "take the cup of salvation" and be so satisfied, as to want nothing *better*, but not so as to want nothing *more*, even that instead of a cup brought to us in this distant wilderness, we may have the blessedness of partaking directly of the river of life as it proceeds "out of the throne of God and the Lamb." *Better* than what we have, cannot be, for it is of God. *More* of it, we must have, in proportion as we get nearer to God, in the perfectness of our likeness to his holiness. And when his image shall be all complete in us, no sinfulness remaining to be cleansed away, no feature of holiness to be brought out in more maturity; when he who sitteth "as a refiner and purifier of silver," shall behold in us, as in Adam, when just created, the full reflection of his own likeness, every vestige of the fall obliterated, every end of the redemption of Christ accomplished, so that we are *qualified* to behold "his face *in righteousness*;" then will that face be unveiled in its ineffable glory; the brethren will be taken to the table of their brother, the Lord Jesus, who is "head over all things" for their sake; the children will be received to the immediate presence and vision of their Father who is in Heaven. They shall see him as he is, for they shall be like him.* They shall be *satisfied*.

* 1 John ii. 2.

This leads us to *the time* when the Psalmist expected to be in possession of that consummation of happiness. "I shall be satisfied *when I awake*, with thy likeness." *When I awake.* We have no doubt that the awaking of the dead at the resurrection of the just, was what David was especially anticipating when he wrote these words. But we may suppose him to have had reference also to a nearer event. There must be something very like awaking out of sleep, when the soul, disembodied at death, first beholds those things eternal, the glory of God, the inheritance of the saints, of which in this life it had formed so feeble a conception. There is nothing indeed in an immortal spirit departing from the body, analogous to the falling asleep of the body in death, and waiting till the resurrection before it lives again. There is no unconsciousness. But there is something in the whole condition of a soul *before* it departs hence; in all its views and ideas of the future; in the thraldom of its powers; in the dreaminess of its best thoughts of the heavenly state, very like the movements of our minds in sleep. What torpor holds down our faculties when we try to realize what, if God's people, we soon shall be! How drowsy and dull our liveliest conceptions of things unseen and eternal! How feebly and confusedly do our ears hear the sounds from the eternal world, bidding us give diligence to be ready to meet our God! How little we feel what we are, and whither going! Will not the soul seem to itself to have suddenly awaked out of sleep, as if the shadows and dreams, and insensibility, of a night of slumber had all been dispersed at once, and almost a new existence begun, when coming forth from the "earthly house of this tabernacle,"

it shall find itself in the midst of the heavenly inhabitants, in the unveiled glory of their eternal portion, in the immediate presence and vision of their great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ?

But when thus we awake, it will be with God's *likeness*. The departed child of God will see his face in a righteousness made perfect. The work of sanctification will have been completed at the dissolution of the body. The Christian departed is thus all ready for the presence of the glory of God. He goes therefore into that presence, and abides there, without hindrance to the most perfect communion, and *is satisfied* in "the fulness of God."

But there is still a sense in which he looks forward to a period of more complete satisfaction. All that the disembodied spirit is, all the powers and faculties it possesses, are satisfied. It knows no want. It rests from its labors. "Absent from the body," it is "present with the Lord."* Its communion with God is full; every veil taken away. But still it is "*absent from the body;*" and it is absent, not from choice, but because the body is under the bondage of death, and as long as it lies there, the penalty of sin is upon it, and the redemption of man is not complete. It is as much against nature, and in contravention of the purpose of God in our creation; it is as really a continuance of the power of death, for the soul to be absent from the body, as for the body to be deprived of the soul. If the immortal spirit be the only life of the body; the body is the only proper habitation of that spirit. And so long as their separation lasts, both are inheriting the consequences of sin; the one as lying in the

*2 Cor. v. 8.

corruption of the grave, the other as living in exclusion from a residence wonderfully made for it, by the wisdom and power of God.

Hence it is promised, as the finishing work of the redemption of Christ, which is to destroy all the works of the devil in his people, and make a full end of all that sin has done, that this absence from the body shall have an end. The grave is to be made to give up its dead. Its prisoned bodies are to be unbound. Its corruption is to put on incorruption. Its mortal is to put on immortality. In the perfectness of the original creation shall the bodies of the dead in Christ come forth. Yea more, "He shall change our vile bodies and make them *like unto his own glorious body;*" so that, as our souls shall be like him in holiness, our bodies also shall be like him in glory. And think ye, that those blessed ones, who died in the Lord and are now blessed with the Lord, do not remember with the fondest expectation that promise of a glorious, triumphant resurrection of their bodies? Can they regard the work of their Redeemer as finished, so long as there remains a word of that declaration unfulfilled: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death; O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction?"* What nearer union can take place than the marriage between the soul and its body; and what more violent, unnatural divorce, than when they are separated at death; and next to the redemption of the soul from the condemnation of sin, what more worthy object of the redemption achieved by our blessed Lord can there be, than the restoration to the ransomed soul of its

* Hosea xiii. 14.

long lost and ruined body, raised from death, and invested with the glory of him who is "the resurrection of the life?" Is there a spot on earth, therefore, which a child of God now "absent from the body, and present with the Lord," remembers with more interest than that where his body was buried; where its dust lies mingled with the dust of the earth, forgotten of men, seen of God; and whence, on a day soon coming, it is to come forth, at the sounding of the last trump, incorruptible and immortal, to be one with that soul again, and that forever and ever? Hence, satisfied as that disembodied spirit is, because made perfect in holiness, and now in free and perfect communion with God; satisfied, because all its own capacities are filled with blessedness; we must suppose there is a time coming when, as by the resurrection of the body, it will be more completely restored from the consequences of sin, so will it be restored by the same cause to means, and avenues, and capacities of bliss which in its separate state it could not have; and hence to a satisfaction peculiar to that period of the Church, which will succeed the resurrection. Thus we understand St. Paul, when he speaks of those who have "the first fruits of the Spirit" as "*waiting for the redemption of the body.*"* So waits now that holy patriarch whose exulting anticipation of the resurrection we repeat at the burial of our dead, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."† It cannot be to Job, or to the rest of the ransomed of the Lord, a matter of indifference, that worms have now destroyed

* Rom. viii. 23. † Job xix. 25, 26.

those bodies in which they once dwelt. It must be a matter of earnest expectation, knowing as they now do, how truly their Redeemer liveth and reigneth, that he will soon "stand on the earth" in the midst of the graves of his saints, and force them to give up their dead. It was that awaking, to which David in the text looked forward, and to which his spirit, absent from the body, though full of glory, still looks forward; "*I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.*"

That will be the day of the fulfillment, as never before, of that which has been so long written, "*Death is swallowed up in victory.*"* Death is now conquered in every departed believer. But then it will be swallowed up, lost, abolished in victory. There will be no more death to the people of God. Death will all be dead. And the song of praise shall ascend from the whole ransomed multitude, "Thanks to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"† O, then, indeed, will the Christian be *satisfied. In his flesh,* he will see God. His eyes shall behold that unsearchable glory. It is impossible for us, who have not yet awaked out of the sleepiness and dreaminess of the fleshly habitation, who, having never been absent from the body, can form no conception of the state of a disembodied spirit; it is impossible for us to form any definite idea of the additions to the blessedness of the saints in glory, which the day of resurrection will bring. It is enough for us to say and believe with St. John, "When Christ *shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*"‡

The appearance of our Lord, when he cometh to

* 1 Cor. xv. 54. † 1 Co. xv. 57. ‡ 1 John iii. 2.

raise the dead, is to be attended with a great enlargement of the capacities of the saints for blessedness, and consequently a great enlargement of their fullness of joy at God's right hand. "In my flesh, shall I see God." Our whole redeemed, purified, and perfected nature, so far superior to all other of the works of divine wisdom and power, once in such sinful ruin and desolation, then rebuilt as a glorious temple for the worship of God forever, adorned with the beauty of a most perfect holiness, fragrant with the incense of a most perfect love, and filled with the memorials of the redeeming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be taken possession of, and inhabited by, the glory of God, as when the bright cloud came down upon the new-built temple of Jerusalem, and "filled the house of the Lord." All the inner chambers; all the mysterious and vast capacities of that renovated and exalted nature will be filled with God. St. Paul speaks of that glorified state, as that in which the saints will be "*filled with all the fullness of God.*"* Think of that expression! It measures "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height," of heaven. "*Filled with all the fullness of God*"! Every faculty, every affection, every desire, every thought, every sense, thus filled; thus in immediate communion with the glory of Jehovah! It is in vain that we endeavor to reach a height of thought from which to survey even a little margin of that promised inheritance. Our loftiest mount of vision is enveloped in cloud. Our best anticipations, when the full reality comes, will be found "but as dreams when one awaketh." There must be a boundless difference between seeing that inheritance

* Eph. iii. 19.

"*through a glass darkly*," and seeing it "face to face." We have not yet awaked. Our best conceptions are sleepy and imaginary. But when we do awake with God's likeness, we shall be satisfied.

And now, my brethren, with some considerations arising out of the views we have been occupied with, we will conclude this discourse.

1st. Let us be careful, when we indulge a hope of the heavenly bliss, that it is the heavenly bliss we are hoping for, and not some creation of our own imagination. Many a man who comforts himself with such hope, would find nothing that his heart could enjoy in the happiness of the saints, were it once revealed to his view. How infinitely is it exalted above the groveling ideas which the world forms of its nature, as if any but a holy heart could know it. You have heard, in this discourse, how the scriptures speak of it. Job's expectation of it was, "In my flesh, I shall see God." David's, "I will behold thy face in righteousness." John's, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Our Lord expressed the same, when he prayed: "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."* You see the grand idea. Intimate communion with God; happiness arising out of being with him; such is the highest conception presented in the scriptures of the life eternal. We love to speak of it in the beautiful imagery of the scriptures; but let us take care that we rest not in the imagery. To think of heaven as "a *rest* which remaineth to the people of God," gives a refreshing prospect to the wearied heart; but we must be

* John xvii. 24.

careful to think of it as a *Sabbath*-rest, a *holy* rest—rest in God; rest which none but holy hearts can know. The sorrowful heart, to which all this world, viewed through the darkness of affliction, appears shrouded in continual night, dwells with pleasure on the thought, *there shall be no night there.* But you must remember that it is only because the saints shall see the face of the glory of God; and that to all who are not prepared by a personal holiness to commune with that glory, it is all night, even as the brightest day is darkness to the blind.

I doubt not there will be innumerable contributions to the happiness of that inheritance; beauties to the eye, harmonies to the ear, noble offices for every faculty of mind, a universe of knowledge to enjoy; intellectual and spiritual communion with the works and people of God; a thousand inlets and streams of bliss, of which we can have no conception here. But they will be only the tributaries to the ocean. They will aid, but not contribute, the blessedness. To its great source in the divine fullness, they will stand related, as the loveliness of the garden of Paradise, to Adam's walking with God in its midst; the smiles of God reflected, his praises echoed, his love expressed; all of them only the varied *forms* under which he will spread the table of his heavenly communion. But the King, himself, shall come in to see the guests, and "God will be *all, and in all.*"

2d. You must see, brethren, how great and radical is the spiritual change, the change of heart, which all must undergo, before they can enter into that life of the world to come. Great is the contrast and the opposition, between the aspect in which the scriptures represent the

heavenly felicity, and the affections and dispositions of the natural mind. What, to the world, is less interesting, more insipid, less capable of their appreciation, than the expectation of David: "I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness." Communion with God! what is there which the unregenerate heart cannot more easily partake in, and enjoy? O, how utterly dead is that heart to all such blessedness! Instead of seeking it, hungering for it, thinking of all future happiness as consisting in its perfection; it turns away from it, to almost any communion with earthly things as a relief, and feels positively averse to expending a single thought upon endeavoring to draw nigh to God. My hearers, is this your state? Must heaven change its whole nature, before you could be happy there? But it will not. What then? Why you must be changed in your whole spiritual nature, if you would be capable of happiness in heaven. A mighty change, on one side or other, there must be, or you cannot see the kingdom of God. "*Ye must be born again*," is a requisition, founded, not merely in the will of God, but in the nature of heaven, and in the fallen, sinful, alienated condition of the nature of man.

3d. You see, my brethren, how good an evidence it is that God's work of grace hath place in you, and that you are being prepared to "see his face in righteousness," if now you "hunger and thirst after righteousness." A precious blessing has our Lord pronounced on that state of mind. The hungering soul "*shall be filled*." It shall be filled with the holiness it seeks. In other words, it shall be satisfied. That earnest appetite for holiness, is

the surest evidence of holiness already begun. It is the exercise of that very grace which it seeks. It is the fruit of the Spirit of holiness, by which he witnesses with your spirits that you are born of God. It is the very essence of all true prayer, and must be answered. It is that beginning of communion with God, which has only to go on, to enlarge at last into the fullness of the communion of heaven. "My sheep hear my voice and they follow me, (saith the good shepherd,) and I give unto them eternal life." That following of the heart after Christ; that hungering for more of the bread which he giveth; that bleating of the sheep after the fountain of water to which he leads his flock, satisfied no where else, expecting satisfaction no where else; *that* shews where you belong, who your shepherd is, and how surely eternal life will be given you when he gathers his flock around him.

Lastly; Let those who have in their hearts the evidence of God's children, enjoy the expectation of what he has prepared for them when they shall awake in the world to come. It is written, "He giveth songs in the night." Our text is one of those songs. It was given to David in a dark night, when the wicked compassed him about. His heart rejoiced in God as he sung these strains: "I will behold thy face in righteousness. I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness."

Brethren in the Lord, be the same our joy in the trials of our pilgrimage and warfare! It is the Lord's song in a strange land, where we are far from home; the land of our dispersion and bondage; the land of sorrows and darkness, of enemies and conflict. Have ye the first fruits of the Spirit in your hearts, as a pledge and foretaste of the

glorious harvest? Then enjoy the blessed hope of the full fruition of that harvest, when you shall rest from your labors. The more you find in this world to afflict you, the more let your hearts be feasted with the prospect of that world where every tear is wiped away. When tribulation cometh upon you, and all seems dreary and empty here, and the flesh is tempted to murmur, remember you have in heaven "an enduring substance," "an incorruptible inheritance," "a crown of righteousness." Seize the harp and sing: "Why art thou cast down, Oh my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me! Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him." The time of my redemption draweth nigh, when I shall behold thy face, O God, in righteousness. I shall be satisfied, when I wake up with thy likeness.

SERMON XXII.

THE MINISTER OF CHRIST EXHORTED TO GROWTH IN GRACE.

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1 TIMOTHY, VI. 11.

"Thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

THE Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy, his own son in the faith, are impressive records of the deep concern of that holy Apostle, for the spiritual advancement of his younger fellow laborer in the Gospel field. They show how, in his view, the growth of usefulness in the ministry depended on growth in grace, and how necessary he thought it, that whosoever would build up the Church, by the increase of its holiness and of the number of living members of Christ, should himself be built up in the deep laid and well wrought experience of things pertaining to the Christian life; that whosoever would be instrumental in leading sinners to the fountain of life in Christ, should be a man well acquainted in his own heart with the preciousness of that living water, and constantly in the habit of drinking thereof, for his own spiritual necessities. The text is an example of what we refer to. It is a loud call of an aged and experienced ambassador of Christ to a young minister of great piety and promise, warning him against dangers which might ruin his usefulness, by ruin-

ing his spirituality of mind, and urging him to press on after an ever increasing attainment in that eminent qualification for his ministry which is found in a vigorous, earnest, and growing piety.

I. Let us first consider the designation under which Timothy is addressed—"*Thou man of God.*"

It is a form of expression which frequently occurs in the Old Testament. It is applied to Moses, and David, and Elijah, and various others. But we find it there used for none but men bearing the *prophetic* office. The unofficial members of the Church, however eminent in holiness, and however honored by such appellations, as "sons of God," "the peculiar people of God," &c., &c., are never called as Timothy is addressed in the text; and even the official men, who bore the dignity of priests of the Levitical Law, except such of them as were also called to the office of prophet, were not so named.

Now, the reason of this is seen in the meaning of the appellation. "Man of God," means *God's man* by way of eminence; God's messenger, honored with a special call and message; one sent upon a great errand from God, and specially chosen for that very purpose. Such was not the call of the Jewish priest: he *inherited* his office, coming to it by virtue of his connection with the family of Aaron. Nor was the Jewish priest, as a priest, sent from God on any errand to man. His office was that of an intercessor, on the part of man, with God. Not so the *prophets* of the Old Testament. They were God's men emphatically; they came directly from him to men, with messages of solemn import. And besides this, there was no inheriting that office. The prophet was person-

ally, individually, directly, chosen and anointed of God for his work. Thus was he a "*man of God.*"

Now, the minister of the Gospel, as God's messenger, is the prophet of the Christian dispensation. He is a priest indeed, but *only* as *all* believers in Jesus are "a royal priesthood,"* to offer up the spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, in the sanctuary of their own hearts, through the mediation of the one sacrifice offered once, for all in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. In his official distinctive work, the minister of the gospel has no errand of *intercession* from man to God. His office is simply that of an *ambassador* from God to man; and his call to that office is, in every case, an individual, personal call; as much so, and as much from God, as was that of Moses in Midian, or of Samuel in the tabernacle, or of Elisha in the field, or of the sons of Zebedee at the sea of Tiberias, or of Saul on the road to Damascus.† If, in those cases just mentioned, the call from the Head of the Church was heard by the ear, in a voice from heaven; and if the call of the minister of the Gospel in these days, by the same authority, is by the silent agency of the Holy Spirit, speaking in the ear only of a listening conscience, there is still no difference as to the reality of a personal and direct call from God. Hence that solemn question at the ordination of our ministers, the answer of which demands such a searching, faithful, prayerful self-examination—"Do you trust that you are inwardly moved by the

* 1 Peter, ii. 5,9.

† We must be understood here as speaking exclusively of that *inward* call of which, under God, one's own conscience is the final judge. To the outward call, by the laying on of hands, we have no allusion; but at the same time we would guard against any inference, from our silence, derogatory to its necessity.

Holy Ghost to take upon you this office and ministration?" And hence the Church, in her address to those who are ordained, exhorts them to consider that they are called "to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord." Thus is the minister of the Gospel, who has been truly called, a *man of God;* God's man, for God's work. And hence the application of that name to Timothy in the text, "Thou, O man of God, follow after righteousness, godliness," &c. The name has come down from him to us; and what a sermon does that very name preach to a minister of Christ, as to the responsibility and solemnity of his work! Who does not so realize his short-coming in all the spirit of his office, and all the duty it involves, as to feel his heart shrink at the application to himself of such a title? But such is our scriptural address, brethren in the ministry, and it is for us to see that we honor it, by diligently obeying the exhortation addressed to us in the text—"*Flee these things, and follow after righteousness,*" &c.

II. In considering this exhortation, let us first speak of what we are here enjoined to flee—"*These things*"—what things? The answer is in the previous verses: "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Then comes the exhortation—"Man of God, flee *these things.*" It is therefore the desire to be rich—the love of worldly possessions with all those temptations and snares, those encumbering

cares and dangerous worldly lusts, which come so directly from that source, and so often drown the professing Christian in spiritual ruin. It is *these things* against which we are exhorted.

A minister, even in the furthest separation from the possibility of worldly gain, provides no escape from the exhortation in the text. It is not probable that Timothy had any worldly substance, or any prospect of becoming possessed of much. Days of persecution, when men had literally to forsake all things to follow Christ, were no times to lay up treasures on earth. There is no minister among us so poor, and so unlikely ever to be otherwise than poor, whom it would not be quite as reasonable still to charge against the love of money, as it was for St. Paul thus solemnly to exhort his beloved Timothy.

The truth is, brethren, no position in life is exempt from this rank root of all evil. It is indigenous in the heart of man, and stands all climates, and can grow under the most adverse conditions. The heavy foot of poverty cannot tread it down, so that it will not grow by the pressure, and extract sustenance from its adversities. The entire impossibility of any considerable increase of worldly possessions is no barrier to its growth. It is not the man who *becomes* rich, but who *desires* to be rich, that falls into the temptation and snare. It is not the *having* but the *loving* of money, which is the root of all evil. It was some who "COVETED *after*," not who had *gained* wealth, that Paul spoke of as having "erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." The coveting of worldly possessions may flourish in the hearts of beggars, and within the walls of a monastery, and in

the narrow worldly circumstances of a poor village pastor, as luxuriantly as in the counting-rooms of merchants, or the haunts of the exchange. The man who desires only to lay up an amount, which to another would be but a beggarly pittance, too trifling to be cared for, may nevertheless be as much engrossed and cankered by that desire as another with the coveting of millions.

I cannot take time to speak of the destructive effect of such a passion upon the heart of a minister of Christ as to all the spirit of his work, or upon his reputation and usefulness. The mere *appearance* of the evil is a blight upon his influence. St. Paul's charge to Timothy as a man of God was "*Flee these things.*" Get far away! The very neighborhood is dangerous; the atmosphere is infectious. The same charge would I urge, on the present occasion, upon those especially who are now about to be received to the work of the ministry. *Flee these things;* all worldly lusts indeed, all secularity of spirit; particularly that which fixes and incarnates itself in that root of all evil, the love of money, whether there be hope of being ever much increased in goods or not. Be determined that the breath of the reputation of such a spirit shall never settle upon your influence. See to it that your motives in undertaking the ministry, and in all its future prosecution, be elevated far above that level. Be jealous of your hearts in this respect; be not satisfied with finding that the evil spirit has not *yet* entered. You are to change condition and circumstances, and consequently temptations. It is never too late for the heart to be taken captive by that snare of the devil. The

young man in his studies, with no wants but his own to provide for, is a very different being from the same man in the world, with a household to provide for. The root of evil, which, in the retirement of preparatory study, may lie almost dormant in the heart, may grow rapidly to seed when stimulated by the influences of more social and public life. *Flee these things* in the motives which shall influence you in selecting or seeking a field of labor in your sacred work. *Flee these things* hereafter in the considerations which shall govern you in changing a field of labor where your work is blessed, for another more inviting in a worldly view. *Flee these things* in those efforts and arrangements which, under the general duty of so providing for yourselves and your families, as to be free from the necessity of distracting secular cares, it is proper for a minister to see to; but which may be so seen to as to nourish a worldly spirit, and betray the operations of that spirit, to the great injury of your usefulness. Flee these things *in the very appearance.* Take care of your *conversation,* lest it seem so to love to linger amidst certain topics, and so to indicate a mind attached to certain channels of thought, that the appearance will be as if your interests and affections were more under the sway of the love of money, than the honor and usefulness of your high calling allow. Be determined that there shall be nothing in your actual state of mind, or in your reputation, to hinder you from preaching with all boldness and faithfulness against all worldliness of mind, and especially that deadly form of it now under consideration; nothing, when you are so preaching, reasonably to awaken in the hearer the words, "*Physician, heal thyself.*"

2. But, besides what we are to *flee from*, St. Paul's exhortation to Timothy prescribes what, as ministers of the Gospel, we must *follow after;* "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness."

The foundation of the *minister* is the *Christian.* To be a *man of God in office,* one must first be a *child of God in heart and life.* The first school of preparation for the preaching of Christ, is that of the knowledge of Christ in the habitual experience of a believing heart, embracing his promises, living on his grace, following his commandments. Education for the ministry begins at the conversion of the sinner; it goes on with every new experience of his own heart and of the preciousness of Christ; it enlarges as faith increases, and love grows earnest, and lessons of patience and meekness are better learned, and as righteousness and godliness are more understood by their practical applications in the daily life. The education of books and teachers and the class-room, from the foundation in the college to the termination on the day of the laying on of hands, makes far the most appearance to the common eye, and to some, we fear, seems the only education. Its great importance I need not assert or vindicate. But, brethren, it is merely man's education. The teacher is only man; and for a man of God we need God to teach. It is his work we have to do, and it is his preparation we must have. Hence, important as is the education of learning and of the intellect, the education that grows up in the closet of secret prayer, in the personal application of the Scriptures to your consciences, to your hopes, your affections, and motives, and walk; in the study of yourselves and of that spiritual knowledge of

Christ for which Paul counted all things but worthless; that education of which the Bible is the text-book, the spirit of God the teacher, a meek and lowly mind the learner, secret prayer the lamp, and a watchful self-discipline the rod; that education, the progress of which is in the bringing of every thought more and more "into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Oh! nothing can compare with *that* in its worth or necessity to a minister of the Gospel. It is riches which we may well covet after: it is gold, the love of which is the root of all blessings, and addeth no sorrow with it: it is the strong protection against erring from the faith—far stronger than the best education in the mere knowledge of the arguments of the truth.

A minister without the education of books is considered a very destitute being, and very unqualified for his office. But a minister with the education of grace, what is he in the sight of God? What should he be in his own sight? The man of an unchanged heart; who never came as a sinner to Christ for mercy; who knows nothing by experience of that precious Gospel out of which all the object, motive, weapons, encouragement, strength, and patience of the ministry must come; the mere hireling functionary wearing the profession of the ministry as an automaton performs its part in the dress of a living man; a dead body standing up in the holy place of the sanctuary, braced to its position by outward ordinance and worldly ties: can such do the work of an evangelist? Nothing would have filled a devout Israelite with a deeper sense of profanation than to place a corpse by the altar of God's temple. But what must be thought in Heaven of one

who is yet dead in heart towards God, with all the corruption of an unregenerated nature about him, such a man ministering in Gospel sacraments and Gospel promises and invitations, professing to stand beside the fountain of living waters, as if he knew their preciousness to perishing souls; accountable for the duty, which he has bound on his soul by most solemn vows, of setting forth the Saviour of sinners in all the riches of his grace! Is HE a man of God? Yes, in profession, in vow, in office, in responsibility. As such, he must stand at the judgment bar. Oh! that all would be horribly afraid of being made by ordination men of God, until they have been first made by regeneration God's children, having the spirit of adoption shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost.

But it is not the possession of grace so much as *growth* in grace that we are led by the text to speak of—the following after more and more attainment in the several attributes of a Christian character already essentially possessed.

And here, I would say, with special emphasis, that a minister's spiritual qualification for his great spiritual work is in his being not merely a Christian, but a *growing* Christian. Is it the merely living tree that bears good fruit, or is it the growing tree? Is it the old wood of the vine that puts out the fruit-bud, and suspends the clustering grapes, or the latest growth? So it is with every Christian. He is either growing, or withering in his religious life. There is no possibility of his standing so perfectly still, that he shall be neither gaining nor losing. So is it with the minister. He may possess the essential reality of the spiritual life, and that life may have manifest-

ed itself in many goodly branches of the true vine; but if those branches are not growing, they are decaying, and their fruitfulness has declined. That growth which once bore fruit may remain, but the buds of new fruitfulness are not formed. We can no more depend on a past growth of love and faith, for present fruits of love and faith, than the Israelite in the wilderness could subsist one day upon the manna that he gathered days before; or, than a Christian can live upon past prayers, instead of daily renewed communion with God. It is the present experience, and not merely the *remembered* experience of the grace of God; it is the fresh enjoyment of his love, the fresh delight in his service, fresh spiritual discernment of things of the spirit; it is the knowledge of Christ, not merely once attained and still preserved, but a knowledge daily renewed and now enjoyed, and now ever enlarging and getting more and more to possess the soul, which prepares us for, and animates us in patiently pursuing our daily work, and makes the man of God as a tree planted by the rivers of water, bringing forth its fruit in due season, the leaf never withering.

Give me the man in whose heart the love of God is abounding more and more, and I will ask *him* to preach on the wonderful love of Christ in the redemption of sinners, and on the constraining power by which it should bind us to live unto him, as well as on all the earnest devotedness which should flow therefrom. Give me the minister of an active, strengthening faith, such as is daily drawing new supplies of grace, and hope, and peace, from the fountain in Christ, and he shall preach on such a text, as "*He that believeth on the Son hath life.*" Show me the minister who is going on to acquire an ever fresh and en

larging experience of the preciousness of that peace which Jesus promises to the weary heart that comes to him,—he is the man to go with a tender, affectionate, persuasive zeal, and tell a perishing world what a Saviour they are rejecting, when they turn away from Jesus. Oh! it is when we are most hungering and thirsting after righteousness, that we are best prepared to press sinners to come to the heavenly feast. Then, it is, that the Bible is so full of texts; and that materials of discourse seem so richly to abound, and that the true savor and unction of the Gospel, as morning dews from the mount of God, rest upon our ministry; because then we speak what we do know, and testify what our faith solemnly realizes. How shall we minister in the Gospel with any sustaining confidence that we ourselves are true disciples of Christ, having a saving interest in his redemption, except we are striving to grow in grace? There is no evidence that we are alive unto God so good as that of growth in the grace of God. How shall we preach to a Christian people upon the duty of a continual progress in holiness, yea, reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering, that their path may be as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day, except we know in the consciousness of our hearts that we ourselves are striving after that same blessed progress? And how can we ever increase in the real strength of our ministry, in its power with God to bring down the blessings of his spirit, or in its power with man to accomplish in his heart that great change, which only the power of God can effect, but as we increase in our personal nearness to God through faith, and become more thoroughly baptized with the Holy Ghost?

Therefore, O man of God, and ye who are now to be invested with the office of the man of God, I beseech you "follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." You will need all the strength of "*faith*" you can ever obtain, that you may do your work in full view of eternity, of God, of judgment, of heaven, and hell; that you may trust with an unflinching and undiscouraged heart in those divine promises, which must be all your consolation as ministers of the Gospel, and may always enjoy the invigorating feeling, that you go to your labors in the name, in the grace, in the strength, and under the shadow of the Almighty. You will need all the "*love*" you can ever get, to give you that earnest, affectionate, pleading heart, out of which the true eloquence of our ministry proceeds, and which alone furnishes the constraining motive, the unwearied zeal, the abundant argument, and the whole pleasure of our office. You will need all the progress you can make in "*patience and meekness*," so that difficulties, and crosses, and apparent unfruitfulness, and the hardness of heart, and all the thousand annoyances and discouragements of every form, which you must expect to encounter in trying to bring sinners to God, instead of paralyzing your zeal and making you settle down in a mere formal routine of service, that expects no blessing from God and no great work of grace in man, may, on the contrary, take you nearer to the arm of the Lord for help, and make you more conformed to the mind of Christ, who was "meek and lowly in heart."

And now, that I may as much as possible speak the word in season, to those who are here to be invested with the office of ministers of Christ, I will introduce, as it

were, a new text, as the guide of what I desire yet to say. You remember the words of our Lord to his ordained disciples—"I have ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."*

"*I have ordained you.*" Ever in the course of your ministry, my young friends, remember from whence your authority to minister in the Lord's vineyard proceeds. Visibly, the servant and steward of Christ, who is over you in the Lord, conveys it. Invisibly, it is the Lord himself who gives it. You can have no place in the ordained stewardship of the Gospel, but as Christ himself assigns it to you. In assigning the work, and investing you with the commission of his ministers, he lays on you the most solemn responsibility to himself. "*I have ordained you*" means, *to me you are to give an account.* Your day of ordination and your day of judgment are most intimately connected. The vows and the duties here to be bound upon you, will be bound in heaven; and whether you heed them or not, fulfill them or not, they will meet you and confront you in the day when you shall give account of your stewardship. Realize, then, that it is the Lord who ordains you. He appoints your work; he will bring your work into judgment; he is to be your guide in doing it, and your great consolation, when you feel your weakness for so momentous a trust. He is your whole strength, your all-sufficient strength; a very present, as also a very mighty help in all time of need.

But *for what* does the Lord thus put you into his ministry? It is a question which it were well for you often

*John xv. 16.

and most solemnly to put to your own hearts and consciences—why hath the Lord ordained me? Why this order of ministry, thus created, so perpetuated, so protected; entered by such vows; held under such responsibility? Why am I admitted thereto? Is it that I may obtain a worldly maintenance, or enjoy a respectable position, and sustain a routine of formal ecclesiastical services? Is it for myself, or the Lord? my own emolument, or the salvation of sinners? "I have ordained you that you should go *and bring forth fruit.*" *Fruit to the glory of God*, whatever it may cost in point of personal sacrifice, is the single object of the ministry now to be committed to you. Nothing can take its place—nothing can excuse its absence. "Every branch in me (saith the Lord) that beareth not fruit, he (the father) taketh away." It is cast into the fire, and is burned.* If these solemn words apply to all fruitless members of the visible Church, much more do they apply to all fruitless branches of its ministry. Let their solemn warning be ever sounding in the ear of your consciences, and especially when you are tempted to live unto yourselves, instead of to the Lord; to be satisfied with the perfunctory fulfillment of a certain round of customary offices, and to make your ministry terminate in itself, instead of aspiring evermore to be instrumental in gathering more fruit to the glory of the grace of God.

But the question arises here—*what is the fruit* which the Lord ordains you to go and bring forth? The answer is found in the Lord's own words—"*that your fruit should remain.*" It is abiding fruit, such as will remain when the

* John xv. 5, 6.

world and all that is therein shall have passed away; standing the test of God's final judgment, and remaining to His glory for ever and ever.

There is never a ministry without fruit, either good or evil; nor without fruit that *remains* in its blessings or its woes for ever and ever. We cannot avoid, if we will, the doing some work. Our indifference and worldliness and negligence and formality will preach and make their impression, if zeal and earnestness and faithfulness do not. But fruit that will remain when the Lord of the harvest, whose fan is in his hand, shall thoroughly cleanse his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner, and burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire—that is the end of the work to which you are called.

There is much fruit in the Lord's ministry which, in that day, will be lighter than vanity, and far worse than nothingness. What if you teach a system of doctrine which is not according to God's word, and lead away the minds of sinners from an exclusive trust for salvation in the righteousness of Christ, to a self-righteous reliance on their own obedience; and they become earnest in *that* religion, and diligent in thus going about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting themselves on the righteousness of God, prepared in Christ, for their justification; and what, if to increase their opportunity of establishing the more widely and surely their own righteousness, you invent for them works of merit, works of self-sacrifice, works of compensation to the law of God, which have no sanction in the scriptures; works of "*voluntary humility*;" and what if in their zeal to work out a righteousness that will satisfy the demands of God's law, they become exceedingly

laborious in such works, giving largely of their substance to build religious establishments, spending daily much of their time in prayers and sacraments and divers bodily services, so that you think them very devout and holy—what is all such fruit? Will it *remain?* Is there any other foundation than that which God has laid in the obedience and death of his only begotten Son? And can all this leading of the souls of men away from that only foundation, to the substitution of their own righteousness, be else than unspeakably abhorrent to God? Can there be any fruit of your ministry more ruinous to the souls of your people, or more condemning to yourselves? Can it abide the day of God, or stand when he appeareth? Can it endure the fire that shall try every man's work of what sort it is?

There is, however, *good* fruit which doth not *remain.* It is good, but temporal; which belongs to the present earthly dispensation of the Church, but will have no place in the heavenly and eternal; it lasts till death, but no longer. It is good, and must be sought, and has its important uses and relations; but it is secondary and subsidiary, and only good when kept in that position. I speak of all that belongs to the exterior, *the visible* of the Church, in its ordinances and ritual, its edifices and ornaments, so far as the word appoints, or a wise consideration of the great end of all may permit. Take care that you give these external things the right place of importance in your ministry, and no more. They are the scaffolding of the building; they must not be treated as if they were the building itself. When *this* is finished they will be dispensed with. They belong to the *seen and the temporal.* You may do a great work, in the estimation of man, in bringing people to sacraments and to attending on outward services, in

rearing church edifices and covering the land with all the *visible* of religion, and yet *nothing for eternity;* nothing that will remain when all that is seen shall vanish away, and only the spiritual and the eternal shall endure; nothing that he who ordains you will esteem as the fruit for which you are sent. Despise not these things; labor for them in their proper relation and place. But remember they are only secondary means at the best.

But fruit there is that remains to all eternity. What is it? I trust you are all ready to say, "It is the salvation of sinners, by bringing them to Christ; it is their being brought to repentance and to a saving faith in Jesus, and their abiding by faith in him as all their hope and life; *that* is the fruit for which we are ordained." Yes, verily; and what else will you compare to *that?* All the visible of the Church—ministry, sacraments, ritual, will pass away, just as the visible of the former dispensation has all passed away. But *that* remaineth. That alone glorifies God. That alone did Jesus die for, and send the Holy Ghost to accomplish, and the ministry to labor for. All else, in comparison, is vanity. You may spend your lives in the mere building up of the Church in its outward appointments; but he who brings only one sinner to Christ is infinitely beyond you in the fruit of his ministry. For such fruit the faithful minister expends his strength; around that one point his studies, and prayers, and anxieties, and labors concentrate. He is comforted only as he may hope that God is blessing, or will bless, his work with such reward. My brethren, is that to be the begining and ending of your work?

But how will you seek it? By what means? The question is exceedingly important. There are ways and means

by which you may seek to save sinners, and utterly fail, and worse than fail; leading souls away from Christ, and hardening them in impenitence and self-righteousness, just because they are not those means which the Lord, who ordains you, has ordained to be used by you. Read the parable of the sower. The sower is the minister of the Gospel. What means does he employ? He sows seed. He expects nothing but as the product of seed. What is that seed? "*The Word*," answers the Lord. Does the Lord speak of any other seed? Can any thing produce the fruit of life in the souls of men, but as it contains, or teaches, or nourishes the word therein? Are sacraments *seed*, or only helps, under God's blessing, of teaching, enforcing, impressing, and nourishing the only seed? Must not all growth in grace, in all the world, be traced exclusively to God's blessing on his word, his truth; just as all fruit in the harvest-field must be ascribed to the sun and rain nourishing the seed of the husbandmen?

Remember, then, my brethren, that to sow the seed of the word, and the *word only*, and by all the means of grace to promote its growth, is as much your great work, as it is to go and seek the salvation of souls; he who fails here, fails in his whole ministry. Nothing can supply that lack. To "*preach the word;* " and in that one work to be "*instant in season, out of season,*" is to be your life. All your heart and mind and strength are needed, and are demanded for it. All are in your ordination consecrated to it, and must be employed for it. So Paul charged Timothy —so you are charged to-day—" before God and our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall Judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing."*

* 2 Timothy iv. 1, 2.

But the word of God is the testimony of Christ. He is "*the truth*," as well as the life. The word severed from its relations to him is not the word of God, is not "the truth as it is in Jesus," and cannot be the seed of the fruit of holiness and eternal life. You may preach a great deal of the word, yea, nothing but truth and the word. You may preach many very solemn, and affecting, and alarming truths, and may make serious impressions, and get the praise of much faithfulness. Duties may be earnestly enforced, the law held forth in its strictness, and the judgment day in its terrors; and yet you may not preach *the word* in its integrity; you may not sow the good seed of the kingdom; you may not preach the Gospel, because you may not preach Christ. Does he teach the solar system, who while he accurately describes all the planets in all other repects, omits to exhibit their relations to, and dependence on, the sun? Can he preach the Gospel, who, whatever else of truth and of the word he may teach, does not set forth Christ and him crucified in his person, and offices, and work for sinners, his death, and present ever-living intercession, as the great central light, and life, and glory, on which all Christianity depends, on which all its parts concentrate, from which all our hope, and strength, and righteousness proceed? Can the word be the seed of spiritual life in the sinner's heart but as it thus testifies of Jesus? Can any fruit of your ministry be that fruit which will remain to the eternal blessedness of the soul and the endless glory of God, except as it grows from the word thus testifying of Christ? And, my brethren, will you not determine, by the help of God, to make it the study of your life to be able with all

simplicity, and clearness, and directness, and faithfulness, and fullness, in the spirit of Christ, to teach Christ to the consciences and hearts of men? Will you not sit at his feet, that he may teach you more and more that great lesson? Will you not seek your whole happiness in that school, and your whole reward in that one work? Never are my sympathies and affections more called out and moved, than when I look upon a young man just entering on the work of the ministry. I see before him, by the light of experience, what he as yet cannot see, however he may expect it, all his trials of heart, with himself with the world, with temptations to discouragement and despondency, to coldness and formality. And the more his desire to do the work, and the deeper his sense of the solemn responsibility upon him and the worth of souls about him, the greater will be many of his trials. My heart is with that young man in all its sympathies. Such, I trust, are those now present, awaiting the laying on of hands for the work of the Gospel. I can only commend them to God and his grace, that they may have for their constant teacher and helper, and their final portion and glory, that same Jesus to whose work they are now to be sent. Evermore may you abide in him, and he in you! Evermore may you be "strengthened with all might, and the Spirit, in the inner man," accomplishing the end of your work in the bringing forth of much fruit, of souls brought to Christ and abiding in him!

ERRATA.

Page 6—line 6 from the bottom, for *perceiveth*, read *receiveth*.
" 13—line 2, before *Catholic*, put *the*.
" 142—line 19, for *terrors*, read *terror*.
" 176—lines 18 and 19, for *we know not*, read *it doth not yet appear*.
" 235—line 13, before *promises*, put *the*.
" 371—text, for *give*, read *giving*.
" 372—note, for *Rom xvi.* 17, read *Rom. viii*, 16, 17.
" 379—note, after Is. lx., put 19.
" 392—line 22, for *precious*, read *previous*.
" 460—last line, for *that of*, read *to*.
" 463—last line, for *it*, read *text*.
" 471—first line, before *man's*, put *in*.
" 496—line 17, for *with*, read *without*.
" 503—line 9 from the bottom, for *on*, read *to*.
" 508—line 4 from the bottom for *and*, read *by*.

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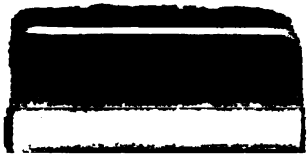
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